
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment

B.C. EXPANDS LIST OF REGULATED RECYCLABLE PRODUCTS

VICTORIA – The government of British Columbia intends to add mercury-containing products such as light bulbs and thermostats to the provincial Recycling Regulation, Environment Minister Barry Penner announced today.

“Recycling waste and other discarded items protects both public health and the environment,” Penner said. “After extensive consultations with industry and stakeholders, we have identified priority products to add to the Recycling Regulation, enhancing B.C.’s role as a leader in recycling initiatives.”

In addition to adding mercury-containing items, an expansion to the existing list of recyclable electronic products is also being planned. This will allow the current list of recyclable electronics to go beyond televisions, computers, laptops, monitors, keyboards, printers and computer periphery, and cover products such as stereos, cellphones and other hand-held devices.

“We welcome this measure, which will divert mercury from landfills and keep it out of our rivers, lakes and fish,” said Kathryn Molloy, executive director of Sierra Club B.C. “It is encouraging that the ministry is also considering solutions for a range of non-computer electronics that would address the impact of their cancer-causing compounds such as fire-retardants.”

Some electronic devices contain toxic metals like mercury, lead and cadmium. If improperly disposed of, these potential pollutants, as well as the mercury contained in products such as light bulbs and thermostats, may end up in surface and ground water. Recycling items containing these harmful pollutants will substantially curb their negative impact on the environment.

“This is a welcome and needed development,” said Brock MacDonald, executive director of the Recycling Council of British Columbia. “Extended producer responsibility programs such as this one not only divert waste from landfills, they also shift the cost and the burden of managing the materials from municipal taxpayers to industry and consumers, where it belongs.”

Under B.C.’s Recycling Regulation, industry is responsible for collecting and recycling any regulated products it manufactures or sells. It is expected that manufacturers will develop and implement their own product stewardship plans to comply with the latest additions to the regulation. These plans should be ready for public consultation and further development in 2009.

“B.C. residents have embraced our electronics recycling program,” said Alda Nicmans, executive director of the Electronics Stewardship Association of B.C., a non-profit association comprising the major producers, wholesalers and retailers of electronic products in the province. “Since the program’s launch in August 2007, over 4,200 metric tonnes of electronic waste have been safely recycled through reputable industries at depots and collection events throughout the province – meaning that these electronic products are no longer going to landfills or being illegally exported. We are looking forward to working with the ministry on the expansion of our successful program.”

“Retail Council members are involved in more than 40 recycling programs across Canada, including electronics, oil, tires and paint here in B.C.,” said Max Logan, British Columbia director of government relations for the Retail Council of Canada. “As the sellers of these products and the touch point for consumers and manufacturers, we look forward to working with the B.C. government to develop new and expanded recycling programs, and to help reduce our province’s collective environmental footprint.”

Industry-led stewardship programs facilitate material recovery and reuse, supporting the secondary processing industry and eventually eliminating these reusable/recyclable materials from municipal landfills. There are currently nine industry groups in B.C. operating recycling programs for electronics, paint, oil, beverage containers, tires, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, gasoline, solvents and flammable liquids.

Visit www.recycling.gov.bc.ca to learn more about product stewardship in B.C.

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