

Step Up Your Recycling Efforts!

Mercury

Did you know..... That mercury is a common natural element found in the earth's crust (Hg)? However, even though it is common and naturally occurs in our environment, it doesn't mean it is safe. At one time it was thought to be safe and even good for us. The first emperor of China was believed to have taken mercury pills to give him eternal life but instead, it killed him. Years ago hat makers used mercury to stiffen and form hats and this led to a high mortality rate among hat makers. The element drove them mad at first and this is where the term "mad as a hatter" originated.



Fluorescent bulbs contain mercury - don't put them in the trash. Recycle these and other mercury-containing items at the Weston Transfer Station

Mercury has no value to the human body and should be considered a poison. For this reason, it is important that we recycle items that contain mercury like CFL (compact fluorescent light bulbs), fluorescent light bulbs, rechargeable batteries, button batteries, older thermometers (with silver liquid inside), thermostats, and some skin lightening creams (look for these ingredients: mercurous chloride, calomel, mercuric, mercurio, or mercury and stop using immediately). [Mercury poisoning linked to skin creams \(FDA.gov\)](http://www.fda.gov/oc/ohrt/mercury-poisoning-linked-to-skin-creams)

One way to help eliminate mercury from our environment is to use LED light bulbs. Light bulbs are now sold by lumens instead of watts. Watts is a measurement of energy used by the bulb, not the amount of light given off. The table below shows the cost savings of using LED light bulbs:

	LED	CFL	Incandescent
Lifespan in hours	10,000	9,000	1,000
Watts (equivalent 60 watts)	10	14	60
Cost per bulb	\$2.50	\$2.40	\$1.25
Daily cost*	\$0.005	\$0.007	\$0.03

Annual cost*	\$1.83	\$2.56	\$10.95
Cost for 50k hours @ \$0.10 kWh	\$50	\$70	\$300
Bulbs needed for 50k hours	5	5.5	50
Total cost for 50k hours with bulb price	\$62.50	\$83.20	\$362.50

** Assuming 5 hours a day @ \$0.10 per kWh.*

Recycling items that contain mercury at the Weston Transfer Station has never been so easy. Rechargeable batteries and button batteries can be placed on the cart labeled “batteries” to the right of the solid waste compactors. Household batteries can be placed with the trash as they do not contain mercury. Fluorescent light bulbs are also collected to the right of the solid waste compactor and are sorted by size and type. If you have thermometers, thermostats or any other items that you believe contain mercury please see one of the attendants for proper placement. Items containing mercury that are collected at our Transfer Station are taken to be properly recycled. Although it is costly to recycle the mercury in these items, the cost is covered by a reimbursement program overseen by the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection.

In fiscal year 2017, Weston’s Solid Waste and Recycling Facility recycled 400 pounds of items containing mercury. This is mercury that will not negatively impact our environment because it was recycled properly.

Weston’s Solid Waste and Recycling Facility’s success starts with you, the Weston Resident. Your efforts make it possible for the Solid Waste and Recycling Facility to sell good quality recyclables for the best possible market prices. In fiscal year 2017, total sales of recyclables were over \$19,000 and 1,565 tons of recyclables were diverted from the solid waste stream saving Weston an additional \$115,606 in tipping fees. The more revenue received from recyclables and the less money paid in tipping fees, the less likely the permit fee will increase.

Please be sure to take a few moments and separate all your recyclables. Let’s keep recyclables out of the solid waste compactors so we can save our natural resources, protect the environment, and help keep the permit fee cost from increasing.

For more information about recycling and Weston’s Solid Waste and Recycling Facility call John Zaccardi, Supervisor of the DPW Solid Waste and Recycling Division at 781-786-5165 or email John at Zaccardi.j@westonmass.org