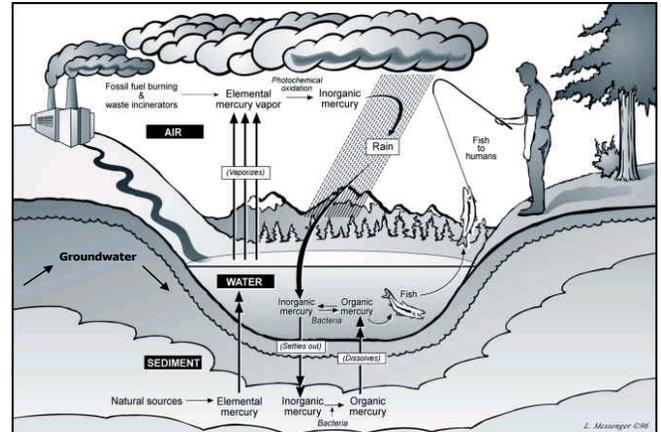


Reducing Mercury Releases from Auto Recycling

Mercury (Hg) is a serious pollutant of concern. When spilled or released, mercury can collect in water bodies where it bioaccumulates in fish that may be caught by area children and families. Since 1988, the Michigan Department of Community Health has issued a state-wide fish consumption advisory for all the state's 11,000 lakes due to mercury contamination.

People contributed to past mercury releases, but we can take action to prevent future ones. Michigan auto salvage yards and dismantlers are key to preventing mercury releases. Automobiles, 2003 models and older, can contain several mercury switches in convenience lighting and anti-locking braking systems that can be removed and recycled. This will prevent spills and emissions that otherwise would occur during crushing, shredding and melting the steel for reuse.



The Automotive Recyclers of Michigan members were leaders in this effort since a pilot program in 1996. Free national recycling of auto switches began in 2006 when the automotive manufacturers created the “End of Life Solutions” Corporation (ELVS). ELVS provides resources on how to identify which vehicles contain mercury switches and how to remove them on their website, www.elvsolutions.org. Select “Mercury Switches”, then “Educational Materials” tab at the top. (Note: Individuals removing mercury auto switches while making repairs can generally recycle them through Clean Sweep Sites or local Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) programs.)

Yards and dismantlers register and order their first storage buckets through ELVS. After joining, sites recycle the buckets full of mercury switches and obtain additional buckets from the ELVS contractor, the Environmental Quality Company (EQ) <https://www.usecology.com/Services/Environmental-Services/Recycling/ELVS-Mercury-Switch-Program.aspx>. About 10 days before dismantlers return full buckets, free of charge, they need to email EQ for a replacement bucket elvsbuckets@eqonline.com.

Recycling switches ensures that the mercury is managed properly and doesn't pose a danger to the environment from spills or emissions during the crushing, shredding, steel smelting and recycling process. Michigan has 281 yards and dismantlers registered with the program. Unfortunately, few are actively recycling mercury switches.

It is estimated that over 2 million older model vehicles containing mercury switches will be recycled each year for at least the next seven years. That's a lot of switches that could be removed and recycled. But, each switch only takes an average of 51 seconds to remove it. The desired outcome for all our efforts is to make our fish safe to eat and our salvage yards and communities safe from mercury contamination. For questions regarding the recycling any mercury items in Michigan, contact the Environmental Assistance Center (EAC) at 1-800-662-9278, or deq-assist@michigan.gov or go to www.michigan.gov/mercuryp2.

REMOVING MERCURY SWITCHES

Removing mercury hood and trunk convenience lights

In some instances such as many GM vehicles, leaving the assembly intact and removing the pellet may be easier than removing the assembly.

1. Check for hood and trunk convenience lights on these cars and trucks

GM	2002 and older
Ford	2001 and older
DaimlerChrysler	1998 and older
Volvo	1991 and older
Audi 100	1977-1988
Audi 200	1980-1988
Mazda Navajo	1993-1997
Mazda B-Series Pickup	1995-1999

2. Disconnect the battery.
3. Find the small light fixture on the underside of the hood or trunk.
4. Cut the power supply wire to the fixture.
5. Remove any fasteners to separate light assembly from vehicle.

