

Presentation Abstract

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Plenary Session I: Current Global Conditions That Are Forcing the Debate on Mercury Retirement

Presentation: Mercury Product Phase-outs & Collection Programs

This presentation will examine and discuss mercury product use, sales, and end of life recovery programs in the United States from the 1940's to the present. Since the late 1980's, mercury product use has declined dramatically in the US, due to environmental and worker safety concerns, new non-mercury technologies, and laws and regulations governing mercury product sales, use, labeling, takeback, and phaseout.

In an effort to reduce mercury releases to the environment, businesses, governments, and individuals are increasing their efforts to remove mercury-containing products from service and properly manage waste mercury-containing products. These entities are concerned that mercury removed from service may be put back into domestic or international commerce and released to the environment from subsequent use.

In combination, these efforts to reduce mercury use and release are resulting in, or have the potential to result in, generation of surplus mercury relative to domestic demand. In turn, this mercury removed from service in the US may be exported to countries and uses where it will be subsequently released to the environment and/or returned to the US in air deposition, products, or mercury-contaminated fish.

In summary, mercury recovery is important, but currently that mercury is going back into commerce. Other options are needed if we are to realize the nationally stated goal of virtual elimination for anthropogenic mercury.