

Rhode Island Mercury Advisory Working Group Mercury Commission Sub-Group on Auto Parts

*Meeting Minutes from October 27, 2004
2:30-4:00 pm
RI DEM, Conference Room B*

Attendees:

Chairwoman Sheila Dormody, Elizabeth Stone, Terry Gray, Eugenia Marks, Jamie Magnani, Paul D'Adamo, Greg Benik, Chris Reilly and Sarah Hoisington.

Called to order by Sheila Dormody, Sub-Group Chair, at 2:35 pm.

Introduction & Review Agenda & Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Sub-Group reviewed and approved September 29, 2004 meeting minutes without amendments. All present voted to approve.
- Chairwoman Dormody asked if there are any suggested changes to the meeting agenda – none were offered.

Discussion about Vehicle Retirement & Follow-up Items from Previous Meeting

- In response inquiries at the September 29th meeting about the number of end-of-life vehicles (ELVs) in Rhode Island, Greg Benik, on behalf of Metals Recycling, provided additional information about Metals Recycling operations.
 - Process approximately 20,000 cars a month.
 - Approximately %60 to %70 arrive in a flattened (crushed) condition.
 - Approximately %50 of the cars are from in-state and %50 are from outside of RI (mostly CT and MA).
 - A large majority of the shredded metal from their facility ends up being shipped out of the country.
- Greg Benik explained the process of what exactly happens to vehicles when they arrive at Metals Recycling – vehicles are dismantled and shredded, leaving behind one of three types of by-products: iron, non-iron metals and non-metallic leftovers (e.g. auto fluff).
- Discussion about the number of vehicles annually retired in RI - Terry Gray pointed out that DEM's estimate of ~ 50,000 annual vehicle retirements in RI does not match up with Metals Recycling estimates of the number of RI cars they dispose of on an annual basis.
- Metals Recycling indicated it does test for mercury in its auto fluff – however, the levels of mercury are below detection rates. Discussion of where the mercury (from switches inside the vehicles) likely ends up – either in the shredded metal or the switches do not break going through the shredder so the mercury is not released.

- Discussion of where mercury from disposed of LCD screens might end up once vehicles are recycled. Might it end up in the auto fluff because the LCD screens are encased in plastic?
- Terry Gray indicated he has all the information he needs to determine the “curve” for retiring cars in RI – he just needs to run the numbers to determine RI’s vehicle retirement rate. (It was noted that both NJ and ME have both used a 15 year vehicle retirement cycle).

Discussion of Potential Funding Sources / Economic Incentives

- Discussion of the RI’s “hard to dispose of tax” – Terry Gray suggested we not take this funding approach off the table just yet. There is a strong nexus between the mercury switch problem and why this tax was originally established.
- Paul D’Adamo provided some explanation of the document he prepared and distributed to the group prior to today’s meeting (“Challenges to Collecting and Recycling Mercury-Containing Auto Parts in Rhode Island”). Explained his position about why there needs to be an economic incentive for auto recyclers to recover mercury switches from vehicles. Questions and discussion about Paul’s report.
- Discussion about the size of the economic incentive that would be needed to make recovery of mercury switches feasible – would \$3.00 per switch be enough? Greg Benik indicated that a \$3.00 incentive would likely make removing switches “revenue neutral” for Metals Recycling. With an estimated 50,000 cars retired each year in RI, a \$3.00 incentive for switch removal could cost as little as \$150,000 per year.
- A consensus was reached that \$3.00 per switch appears to be a reasonable recommended incentive.
- Discussion of the potential health hazards associated with collecting and storing large quantities of mercury switches and the need to minimize the paperwork requirements associated with such switch removal programs.
- Discussion of mercury legislation (Sub A) pending before the PA legislature. Some AAM members were not strongly opposing this approach.
- Discussion of DEM’s ability to enforce such a mercury switch program if the incentive is at or below the break even point.
- It was suggested that the group keep in mind the other aspects of such an incentive program: 1) adequate enforcement; 2) public education & outreach; and 3) collection.
- It was suggested that the enforcement of a mercury switch program be “top down” – in other words, make sure the auto manufacturers are held responsible for ensuring switches are removed before cars are retired and recycled.
- Terry Gray suggested an alternative approach to the economic incentive/bounty proposal being discussed by the group. What about establishing performance criteria (e.g. let the General Assembly establish the mercury switch capture rate) for auto manufacturers, and then letting the manufacturers figure out the most efficient method for meeting the established target? If the capture rates are not met, then a bounty program similar to ME’s approach would kick in.

Additional Discussion – Final Report, To-Do Items, Etc.

- Chairwoman Dormody summarized some of the recommendations being considered by the group -
 - *Focus on collecting switches from end-of-life vehicles:* Establish performance criteria (e.g. let the General Assembly establish the mercury switch capture rate) for auto manufacturers, and then let the manufacturers figure out the most efficient method for meeting the established target. If the capture rates are not met, then a bounty program (similar to ME's approach) would kick into effect.
 - *Education:* Manufacturers create an outreach plan (with some oversight from a stakeholders group), and ultimate approval of plan comes from DEM.
 - *Labeling:* Re-examine 2003 law. Labeling for vehicles is already required. There are no exemptions for vehicles in labeling section.
 - *Phase-out:* No consensus – needs further discussion.
 - *Enforcement:* Should be similar to enforcement and penalty section in the Mercury Reduction and Education Act (RIGL 23-24.9) .
 - *Voluntary approaches:* 1) switch-the-switch programs; 2) education and outreach; 3) pilot project based in RI.

Discussion of Future Meetings

- Possible future meeting dates include Monday 11/8 @ 12:00 and Wednesday 11/17 @ 2:30 pm. Chair Dormody asked again that all participants be ready to discuss/vote on final recommendations at this next meeting.
- Future agendas and meeting minutes from today's meeting forthcoming.

Adjournment

Chairwoman Dormody adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:00 pm.

Recorded by:

*Elizabeth S. Stone
RI DEM*