

Advisory Committee on Mercury Pollution

Meeting #99: June 23, 2010

Time: 9:30 am to noon

Location: Laundry Building Conference Room, Waterbury State Office Complex
Waterbury, Vermont

MINUTES

Members Present:

Michael Bender, Mercury Policy Project
Gary Gulka, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Environmental Assistance Office
Jennifer Holliday, Chittenden Solid Waste District (via telephone)
Neil Kamman, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Water Quality Division
Ruma Kohli, IBM
Senator Richard McCormack

Guests Present:

Lisa Carlson, Funeral Ethics Organization
Matt Levin, Vermonters for a Clean Environment
Peter Taylor, Vermont State Dental Society

The Committee members and interested parties gathered at the Waterbury State Office Complex, Laundry Building Conference Room and via telephone. Neil Kamman called the meeting to order.

Agenda Item 1

Accept minutes from April 19 meeting

The draft minutes were approved with a minor editorial change.

Agenda Item 2

Public comment/committee member concerns

There were no public comments

Agenda Item 3

Legislative update

E-waste legislation passed. Mercury lamp legislation did not pass. H.484 on toxic substances did not receive much discussion in the legislative session.

Gary Gulka indicated that the Agency hopes to meet with stakeholders by September to discuss sustainable funding for residential and small business lamp recycling.

Framework legislation for product stewardship did not progress significantly in the Legislature. The bill that was introduced addressed packaging and printed material that would be captured and handled by producers. This bill was supported by the American Beverage Association as a replacement for the current bottle bill.

Ruma Kohli mentioned that the European Union revisions to the RoHS directive (RoHS recast) will contain new mercury content standards for fluorescent lamps, effective after August 20, 2010.

Michael Bender mentioned that international mercury treaty negotiations continue with the first of five meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to Prepare a Globally Binding Instrument on Mercury was held in June. The next meeting is in Japan in January. Mr. Bender also mentioned a World Health Organization meeting on the future of restorative dental materials and the “phase down” of the global use of dental mercury. He also mentioned that an international inventory or coal-fired power plant emissions will be conducted.

Neil Kamman mentioned that the Clean Water Act 319(g) conference is being held to discuss the petition filed by the New England states and New York regarding the total maximum daily load (TMDL) for mercury and the inability to achieve standards due to out of state mercury pollution. EPA is holding the conference with the so-called receiving states and sending states. It is not expected that there will be any immediate outcomes to this conference.

It was suggested that Neil Kamman draft a letter to Vermont’s congressional delegation on behalf of the Advisory Committee to keep the delegation abreast of this dialogue. A draft will be prepared for next meeting.

Agenda Item 4

Dental amalgam fact sheet – public dissemination

There was discussion that the Advisory Committee’s Dental Amalgam fact sheet has been posted and the Advisory Committee’s web page, but there have been no other actions to publicize it. Michael Bender suggested a press conference in September. Jen Holliday suggested that the fact sheet be disseminated to schools. It was also suggested that a copy be mailed to health care providers and a link provided to a downloadable copy. The Advisory Committee asked Gary Gulka to look into the costs for disseminating the fact sheet to health care providers and schools and report back to the Committee at the next meeting. Further action was deferred to the next meeting.

Agenda Item 5

Mercury emissions from crematoria

Gary Gulka indicated that he is not aware of any activity in the states to directly address mercury emissions from crematoria. He indicated that future regional mercury emissions inventories may show a greater contribution of dental mercury emissions from crematoria that may prompt greater scrutiny of this source. But for the time being, it is not on the radar screen in states.

Agenda Item 6

Update on thimerosal in vaccines – Vermont Department of Health

Chris Finley, Immunization Chief with the Vermont Department of Health provided an update to the Advisory Committee via email. She indicated that focus groups with parents that do not immunize their children will not be completed for another 1-2 months. She also indicated that Vermont is participating in the federal centralized collection of all remaining/expired H1N1 flu vaccine.

It was suggested that another update be placed on the agenda for the next Advisory Committee meeting.

Agenda Item 7

Mercury outreach/program updates – thermostat recycling, lamp recycling, and outreach to sensitive populations

Gary Gulka indicated that mercury in fish posters have been printed for dissemination by Vermont Department of Health inspectors (sanitarians) who visit grocery stores on an average of once every three years. The posters are not mandatory but many grocers agree to display them.

Mercury in fish posters have been reprinted and mailed to Health Officers, requesting that they post these at the state public access areas with maintained bulletin boards. Over 175 access areas will be posted. Additional posters were provided to the VT Department of Corrections who maintain these access areas – to replace damaged or missing signs during the fishing season.

Gary Gulka indicated that the Agency is responsible for determining the capture rate of mercury thermostats. At the present time, the Agency is gathering data to determine an approximation of the number of mercury thermostats coming off the wall annually. Mr. Gulka indicated that the Agency is likely to propose using a methodology similar to one developed by the State of Maine several years ago to accomplish this. The formula requires an estimation of the percentage of thermostats coming off the wall that contain mercury as well as the age of thermostats. The age of thermostats coming off the wall will be estimated by actually checking the printed dates on thermostats that have been collected by wholesalers and retailers. The percentage of thermostats containing mercury that are removed may be estimated by surveying HVAC contractors in the coming months.

The following agenda items were identified for the September meeting:

- Update on thimerosal in vaccines - VDH

- Committee appointments/reappointments
- Dental amalgam fact sheet – public dissemination update
- Update on thimerosal in vaccines – VDH
- Mercury outreach and program updates
- Future of Advisory Committee
- 100th meeting commemoration and celebration of accomplishments with invited guests

There was an interest to add a discussion at the next meeting about the future of the Advisory Committee. There are Advisory Committee members who feel that a recommendation should be made to terminate the Committee and change the focus to an advisory committee on toxic substances in consumer products.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be moved to a different venue in order to invite previous Advisory Committee members to a commemoration and celebration of the 100th meeting and the Committee's accomplishments over this time. Jen Holliday will seek a large site in Williston.

Summary of Motions and Actions

It was suggested that Neil Kamman draft a letter to Vermont's congressional delegation on behalf of the Advisory Committee to keep the delegation abreast of this dialogue. A draft will be prepared for next meeting.

The Advisory Committee asked Gary Gulka to look into the costs for disseminating the fact sheet to health care providers and schools and report back to the Committee at the next meeting. Further action was deferred to the next meeting.

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