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## **National Wildlife Federation®**

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### **Ball State University Muncie, Indiana Spring 2005, Environmental Management**

#### **BACKGROUND**

##### **Campus Profile**

Ball State University (BSU), which is situated on 940 acres in Muncie, Indiana, serves approximately 19,000 students (45 percent male, 55 percent female). Seven academic colleges offer 120 undergraduate programs, 80 master's programs, and 20 doctoral programs in 46 departments and schools. The employee base comprises some 750 faculty, 550 professional staff, and 1,500 support personnel.

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#### **GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

##### **Goals**

To adopt a campus-wide policy regarding the management, containment, and reduction of mercury use, BSU will establish an inventory of mercury-containing items used anywhere on campus. Another goal is to purchase non-mercury containing substitutes, where possible.

##### **Accomplishments**

The Council on the Environment (COTE) passed a resolution recommending that the university phase out all mercury-containing scientific or medical instrumentation campus-wide (a copy of the resolution has been included at the end of this document).

The university has succeeded in adopting this policy and has moved to new mercury-containing devices for use in campus laboratories and other service venues.

##### **Challenges and Responses**

Faculty, staff, and students have been asked to turn in mercury and mercury-containing items for recycling. A phase-out plan for mercury-containing devices and materials has been substantially completed. Implementation of a purchasing and screening process to identify new purchases of mercury-containing items has been undertaken, and a report on progress will be made formally at the close of the fiscal year.

#### **ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

##### **Leaders and Supporters**

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This initiative has been supported by COTE, a university-wide clearing house for sustainability initiatives, but fundamentally it is being implemented by facilities staff members throughout the campus.

### **Funding and Resources**

Costs associated with the implementation of this policy are distributed to the units with administrative authority for the equipment in question.

### **Community Outreach and Education**

News articles regarding the success of this endeavor are to be released at the start of the next academic year.

### **Climate Change**

Though the removal of mercury from the atmosphere does not have a direct effect on global warming, it does, however, reduce atmospheric pollution.

### **National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology® Program**

Our affiliation with NWF's Campus Ecology program has added leverage to our resolution calling for this policy. We continue to maintain a membership in the program, to interact with members of the staff, and to anticipate the opportunity to establish this policy as a goal for the year with the intent of our submitting it for the *Campus Ecology Yearbook*.

### **CLOSING COMMENT**

This initiative of minimizing mercury, though functioning somewhat as a background activity, can serve the larger mission of promoting sustainability campus-wide with the release of news articles regarding the successful completion of this endeavor.

**Reference above:**

**Mercury Minimization Resolution, Adopted November 1, 2004**

Whereas mercury is one of the primary pollutants of concern in Indiana because:

- Mercury poisoning can cause irreversible brain, liver, and kidney damage,
- Fetuses and children are the most sensitive to mercury toxicity,
- Mercury is persistent in the environment and, as a highly toxic form methyl mercury, bioaccumulates in many aquatic species,
- Significant quantities of mercury have been found in most Indiana streams and species of fish. Children less than 15 years of age, pregnant women and women who may become pregnant within 6 years have been advised not to eat any fish caught in Delaware county rivers and streams,
- Even very small amounts of mercury that are disposed of improperly can harm the environment. It only takes 3 grams (approximately 1/25 of a teaspoon) to contaminate a 60-acre lake,
- If a spill occurs, proper clean up is costly, difficult, and dangerous. Recent highly publicized mercury spills that have occurred in Muncie are notable examples,
- If cleaned-up or stored improperly, evaporation of mercury can occur, contaminating the air and exposing everyone that breathes it,
- Recycling mercury-containing items is the only safe way to dispose of them properly.

Whereas mercury has been commonly used in devices and substances throughout the university and cost-effective alternatives to most of those uses are now available.

Whereas Ball State University is a signatory on the Talloires Declaration, which pledges that the university will “Set an example of environmental responsibility by establishing programs of resource conservation, recycling, and waste reduction at the universities.”

Therefore, be it resolved that the Ball State University Community commits to:

- Maintain an inventory of mercury containing items utilized anywhere on campus,
- Purchase non mercury-containing substitutes where possible,
- Implement a purchasing screening process to identify new purchases of mercury-containing items,
- Implement a phase-out plan for mercury containing devices and materials to be substantially completed within one year of the start of this initiative,
- Turn in mercury and mercury-containing items for recycling.

