



Mercury Policy Project

EU 'sees the light' on energy efficient lamps: mercury content going down

1st October 2010

Environmental NGOsⁱ welcome the European Commission's decision to reduce the maximum mercury content in certain energy efficient lampsⁱⁱ. It is not only a good step for the EU but also establishes a global precedent for others to follow, they say.

"We are pleased to see that Commission took steps to reduce mercury in energy efficient lamps going on the market," said Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, EEB Zero Mercury Project Coordinator. "Many more types of lamps will require a reduction in their mercury content and the limits are much lower for those covered before. We are particularly pleased with the lowest limit introduced (2.5 mg Hg/lamp) for commonly used compact fluorescent lamps (CFL) "

"This Commission decision on mercury content in lamps now firmly establishes a global precedent that others should follow," said Michael Bender, director of the Mercury Policy Project and Co-Coordinator of the Green Lighting Campaign.

"The new RoHS³ mercury standards promise to transform the lighting industry on a global scale," said Alicia Culver, Director of the Responsible Purchasing Network and Co-Coordinator of the Green Lighting Campaign. "Workers will be better protected because these lower limits can generally only be reached by accurate and encapsulated (metered) dosing systems that prevent workers from becoming exposed to this persistent toxic chemical. Consumers will also face a lower health risk if a fluorescent lamp breaks in their home or office."

Nevertheless, considering the ban of incandescent lamps already in place, the increased use of energy efficient lamps (mainly in households) and the global relevance of the issue, NGOs still have some serious reservations.

Since 2008, during the comment period, NGOs had expressed concerns that: even lower, than the proposed, limits could be set for most categories, since lamps complying with those levels are already on the market – from at least two international manufacturers; transition periods for requiring lower mercury content were too long and were not necessary, and stated that there should also be expiry dates to drive future innovation of the mercury free market.

In addition, the NGOs are disappointed that there was no maximum limit set for some lamp categories such as metal halides and high-intensity discharge (HID) lamps, and that a mercury ban was not applied to certain applications such as traffic lights. Ultimately, however, they strongly believe that mercury containing lamps should only be used for a limited period of time, and be replaced with other energy-efficient and mercury-free ones such as Light Emitting Diodes (LED).

Complementary, on-the-ground action is now necessary to ensure control, safe disposal and limit exposure to citizens.

"It is now imperative that a standard methodology to control the mercury content in lamps is developed and adopted at EU level, to ensure measures are complied with. National governments need to strengthen safe separate waste collection and recycling of mercury containing lamps. Awareness raising

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campaigns are necessary to inform the public about mercury and measures to be taken for safe use and disposal, including at selling points”, said Lymberidi-Settimo.

‘In addition, EU decision makers must push for strong revised RoHS and WEEEⁱⁱⁱ Directives, with stringent review procedures as well as collection and recycling targets specifically for mercury-containing lamps.’

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Notes for editors

Under the current RoHS Directive (2002/95), its annex has been under review through the comitology procedure. A new annex has now been adopted in the form of EC Decision 2010/571, including exemptions to the prohibition of using certain hazardous substances in electr(on)ic products, such as maximum allowed limits of mercury in energy saving lamps.

In parallel the RoHS and the WEEE directives as a whole are currently under revision (recast) under the EU co-decision procedure which still has to be completed.

The new annex (EC decision 2010/571) as adopted, is currently considered as part of the existing RoHS directive (2002/95) and will be incorporated into the revised version of the directive as soon as this is agreed upon.

See also:

7 October 2009

[NGO's Comments on the classification of CFLs and their mercury content \(\(RoHS Annex review\)](#)

31 August 2009

[Letter to Member States](#)

[Summary table](#)

[NGOs Consolidated comments on RoHS review, concerning mercury in lamps](#)

[Annexes](#)

ⁱ The **European Environmental Bureau, (EEB)**, www.eeb.org, is a federation of more than 140 environmental citizens' organisations based in all EU Member States and most Accession Countries, as well as in a few neighbouring countries. These organisations range from local and national, to European and international. The aim of the EEB is to protect and improve the environment of Europe and to enable the citizens of Europe to play their part in achieving that goal.

The **Mercury Policy Project (MPP)**, www.mercurypolicy.org, began in 1998, and works to promote policies to eliminate mercury uses, reduce the export and trafficking of mercury, and significantly reduce mercury exposures at the local, national, and international levels. We co-founded the Green Lighting Campaign in collaboration with the Green Purchasing Institute and strive to work harmoniously with other groups and individuals who have similar goals and interests.

The **Responsible Purchasing Network (RPN)**, www.ResponsiblePurchasing.org, is committed to leveraging the power of responsible procurement to conserve resources, mitigate pollution and waste, and promote a healthy economy. Conventional institutional procurement of products and services throughout the United States often results in extensive negative impacts on public health and the environment. We are committed to the identification, utilization and dissemination of standards and practices that minimize or eliminate destructive impacts without compromising performance or cost-effectiveness.

ⁱⁱ EC Decision 2010/571, amending the Annex of the Directive on Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) in electrical and electronic equipment, 2002/95, under the Comitology procedure
<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:251:0028:0034:EN:PDF> and corrigendum <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:254:0048:0048:EN:PDF>

ⁱⁱⁱ Restriction of Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Equipment (RoHS) Directive(2002/95), Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive (2002/96)