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Sarasota County offers businesses free mercury collection

Businesses in Sarasota County that have devices containing mercury can dispose of the hazardous material at no cost. The free Mercury Disposal Program operated by Sarasota County's Solid Waste department will accept devices containing mercury until Aug. 31.

Businesses interested in participating in the program should contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask about the mercury disposal program or to talk to the Solid Waste Department. Arrangements can be made to have materials picked up or to drop them off at the department.

Mercury, even in small amounts, is a toxic material and prolonged exposure can lead to nerve damage. Mercury, in sufficient quantities, can harm the brain, heart, kidneys, lungs, and immune system.

"We are soliciting mercury containing devices from any business in the county, even if not medical related, but the greatest response has been from the medical community," said Alison Eggleston, Sarasota County Environmental Specialist.

The free Mercury Disposal Program is not accepting fluorescent lamps, electronics or mercury containing laboratory chemicals. Disposal of those types of products can be done through Sarasota County's Project Green Sweep.

The program has been successful in collecting items, including blood pressure cuffs, thermometers, thermostats, mercury tilt switches and even some loose liquid mercury. "Sarasota County is pleased to offer the opportunity for Sarasota County businesses to dispose of mercury containing devices for free," Eggleston said. "The free disposal has been the perfect opportunity for some business to purchase new non-mercury blood cuffs and remove the old mercury units from their offices and prevent the possibility of costly cleanups from a spill. Other offices simply stored the old devices and didn't know what to do with them."

For more information contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask about mercury disposal or visit the Sarasota County Solid Waste Web site at www.scgov.net.

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