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Mercury Thermometer Exchange Program

Over the summer of 2013, OHSE in conjunction with the Sciences facilitated a mercury thermometer exchange program:



- The goal was to remove the majority of mercury thermometers from the science labs, reducing risk to human health and environmental exposures related to broken thermometers.
- Over 325 mercury thermometers were taken out of the system and exchanged for environmentally safe, non-toxic thermometers.
- The old mercury thermometers were sent for hazardous waste disposal.
- On a go forward basis labs are encouraged to use only non-mercury, environmentally safe thermometers.

Did you know? Mercury is not a standard. Today, there is no scientific or metrological reason to employ mercury thermometers for any application. Fahrenheit chose mercury because it gave more precise readings over a wider range than the alcohol mix he used in his first thermometer. And now, three centuries later, many people assume that Hg thermometers must be the ultimate benchmark for temperature because the specifications for some procedures and processes in commerce and industry still refer to mercury analog instruments. Non-mercury thermometers are as precise and work just as well!

Alan Taylor (Senior Lab Instructor Chemistry) exchanged 30 Hg thermometers for safer, environmentally friendly alternatives.