



INFORMATION BULLETIN

IB 4 - MAY 2010

Lead Wheel Weight Regulations

Lead wheel weights are clipped to the rims of most automobiles in the United States in order to properly balance the tires. Proper balancing improves performance and reduces tire wear. These weights often come loose and fall off. When this occurs, they are either washed into storm sewers and end up in waterways or are gathered during street cleaning and placed in municipal landfills. These weights are susceptible to atmospheric corrosion. When they are placed in acidic conditions, such as those found in municipal landfills, the lead is diffused and may contaminate ground water.

The solution to this problem is to provide safe alternatives for lead in tire weights. Some currently available alternatives are tin, tungsten, and ZAMAC (an alloy of zinc, aluminum and copper). The Environmental Protection Agency's Waste Minimization Program seeks to reduce or eliminate waste in manufacturing in the United States.

Currently, six states have passed legislation or implemented regulations aimed at curbing or eliminating the use of lead wheel weights.

California – In 2009 a bill was signed into law prohibiting the manufacture, sale, or installation of wheel weights that contain more than .1% lead.

Maine – In 2009 Maine passed a law intended to phase out the use of lead wheel weights. Effective January 1, 2011, the use, sale and distribution of wheel weights containing lead or mercury is prohibited. The sale of vehicles equipped with wheel weights that contain lead or mercury is prohibited beginning on January 1, 2012.

Minnesota – In 2009 the Minnesota Department of Administration adopted a mandate that tire dealers use only wheel weights that do not contain lead or mercury when servicing vehicles in the state fleet beginning October 1, 2009.

Oregon – The Oregon Department of Transportation instituted a program to phase out the use of lead wheel weights in the state vehicle fleet. As tires are replaced lead wheel weights will be replaced with steel wheel weights. At least 50% of the state's fleet will be lead-free by 2012 and 90% will be lead-free by 2017.

Vermont – In 2008 Vermont enacted a law that prohibited the use of lead wheel weights in state vehicles beginning January 1, 2010, and banned them from new motor vehicles as of September 1, 2011.

Washington – In 2009 Washington enacted a law that prohibits the use of wheel weights containing more than .5% lead or mercury when repairing or replacing tires after January 1, 2011.