



1325 G Street, N.W., Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20005-3105

202/737-1770  
Fax 202/626-0900  
www.isri.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 19, 2001**

**Contact: Janet B. Kreizman**  
**202-662-8527**

## **ISRI CALLS FOR MERCURY-FREE AUTOMOBILES BOUND FOR RECYCLING**

WASHINGTON, DC—The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc. (ISRI) announced today that, as part of its *Design for Recycling®* initiative, ISRI joins environmental groups and state and local governments in calling for the establishment of a nationwide recovery and collection program for mercury switches in automobiles that are to be recycled. ISRI's Board of Directors approved the Association's policy on automotive mercury switches at their March 2001 Convention in San Antonio.

The policy recommends that, to the maximum extent practicable, mercury switches be removed from end-of-life vehicles (ELVs) prior to being delivered to a scrap processing facility. In addition to recommending removal of mercury switches from ELVs, the new ISRI policy calls on automakers to contribute financial and organizational resources to a mercury switch recovery and collection program.

"One of the most vexing issues faced by our industry is the continued inclusion of potentially hazardous materials, such as mercury, in the design and manufacture of automobiles, appliances, and other durable goods," said ISRI President, Robin K. Wiener.

ISRI has advocated the concept of *Design for Recycling®* since the 1980s. Its goal is to encourage pre-production planning for safe and efficient recycling by eliminating hazardous and non-recyclable materials from the production process. In cases where there are no feasible design substitutes, manufacturers must take responsibility for the hazardous materials they introduce into the design of their products.

-more-

Mercury switches are used for convenience lighting in automobiles to activate lights in areas such as the trunk and hood. Eliminating these kinds of switches in favor of a less hazardous alternative—ball bearing switches—is a simple, cost-effective way to reduce the amount of mercury in the environment. “While auto manufacturers have made strides to phase out of the use of mercury in convenience lighting, there are millions of vehicles on the road today with mercury switches in them. It is to everyone’s benefit to make certain that these switches are removed prior to shredding,” emphasized Wiener.

ISRI’s position on the removal of mercury switches is consistent with the recommendations published in *Toxics in Vehicles*, a report developed by members of the Clean Car Campaign—a coalition of national and regional environmental organizations, including Environmental Defense, Ecology Center, and Great Lakes United. In addition, ISRI is calling on automakers to take financial responsibility for ensuring the proper handling of mercury switches and other mercury-containing devices in the existing fleet of vehicles, both on the road and retired.

“The domestic scrap recycling industry is an integral part of this nation’s efforts to reduce its growing waste volume, conserve its natural resources, and make better use of its diminishing landfill capacity. There are more than 200 shredders across the country, which are responsible for recycling 10 – 12 million automobiles every year,” stated Wiener. “For more than a century, the scrap recycling industry has provided a valuable service to consumers, manufacturers, and governments. Our industry should not bear the burden of the automakers’ decision to use mercury switches in automobiles.”

###

*ISRI—the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc.—is the trade association of the for-profit scrap processing and recycling industry, representing approximately 1,300 companies that process, broker, and industrially consume scrap commodities, including metals, paper, plastics, glass, rubber, textiles. Suppliers of equipment and services to this industry complete ISRI’s membership. A primary association objective is to bring about a greater awareness of the industry’s role in conserving the future through recycling and in increasing recycling by promoting Design for Recycling®. For more information about ISRI, please visit our web site at [www.ISRI.org](http://www.ISRI.org).*