



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Mercury report released

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has released an in-depth report on mercury and the role it plays in the environment. The report, “The Mercury Risk Reduction Plan,” provides detailed information on how mercury gets into the environment and the steps government, citizens and industry can take to reduce mercury emissions.

Early in Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco’s administration, she said one of her environmental goals was for the state to create a mercury-reduction plan. Louisiana has always been progressive in sampling for mercury, but this plan takes sampling efforts a step further to include the reduction strategy that Blanco expressed a need for at the DEQ 20th anniversary ceremony in 2004.

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that can get into the environment through a variety of consumer products, industry processes and other common occurrences. It can become a problem, especially for pregnant women and small children, when ingested by humans. This usually happens when people eat too much fish that is contaminated with mercury.

The Mercury Risk Reduction Plan details the many pathways in which mercury gets into the environment, how it can contaminate our fish and its effects on humans. Many people know that mercury was used in old thermometers and thermostats, but the report details other sources of mercury such as car switches, pipeline gauges, rainfall and many more.

“We knew mercury was an issue back when we issued the first mercury advisory for fish consumption in Ouachita Parish back in 1992,” said Chris Piehler, DEQ scientist and author of the plan. “We have sampled more than 400 water bodies and issued 41 advisories since then. The Mercury Risk Reduction Plan is an effort to bring all mercury-related projects and knowledge throughout the department into one text.”

Copies of the Mercury Risk Reduction Plan are available at the DEQ Web site at www.DEQ.louisiana.gov. You can request a hard copy by calling Customer Service Center 225-219-LDEQ (5337) or Toll Free 1-866-896-LDEQ (5337). You can also request a hardcopy online at: <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/2803/Default.aspx>

“This comprehensive plan culminates a great effort by DEQ staff and stakeholders,” said DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel. “This achieves Gov. Blanco’s goal, a very specific goal that she set in ‘04. With this plan, the state will be in a better position to reduce mercury emissions, limit public exposure and work toward minimizing the need for new mercury advisories on our waterways.”