

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Chairman Henry A. Waxman, 110 Congress

Thursday, November 08, 2007

[Environment](#)

Environmental Risks Of And Regulatory Response To Mercury Dental Fillings

Wednesday, November 14, 2007 2 p.m.

2154 Rayburn

Washington, D.C. 20515

This hearing will examine the environmental risks of mercury in dental fillings (known as dental mercury amalgam) and the government's regulatory response to it.

Dental offices are the third-largest user of mercury in the United States. Mercury contained in the existing dental fillings of Americans comprises over half of all mercury in use today, amounting to more than 1,000 tons. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "Mercury discharges (in wastewater) from dental offices far exceeded all other commercial and residential sources." These discharges may have a significant negative effect on the environment. Sludge, the mercury-contaminated byproduct of municipal sewage treatment plants, is often incinerated, causing the formation of "methylmercury," the most toxic and dangerous form of mercury.

EPA's only dental mercury-specific program is an educational program to encourage new dentists to use equipment to prevent mercury from entering the wastewater.

Mercury dental devices are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), but FDA has never conducted an environmental assessment of the use of dental mercury amalgam as prescribed by law.

Witnesses for the November 14 hearing include:

Panel I

- **TBD**, *Environmental Protection Agency*
- **Dr. Norris Alderson**, Director, Office of Science and Health Coordination, *Food and Drug Administration*

Panel II

- **Mr. Ray Clark**, Senior Partner, *The Clark Group, LLC*
- **Mr. Bruce Terris**, Partner, *Terris, Pravlik & Millian, LLP*
- **Mr. C. Mark Smith**, Co-Chair, Mercury Task Force, New England Governor's Conference
- **Mr. Michael Bender**, Executive Director, *Mercury Policy Project*
- **Mr. Rod Mackert**, Dentist and Faculty Member, *Medical College of Georgia*

<http://oversight.house.gov/investigations.asp?ID=121>