

News Releases

Statement from Gary L. Roberts, DDS, President, American Dental Association

ADA: EPA Regulation on Dental Amalgam Waste Fair and Reasonable

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Contact Information:

mediarelations@ada.org

CHICAGO — The American Dental Association (ADA) believes the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) new federal regulation represents a fair and reasonable approach to the management of dental amalgam waste. The rule was released on December 15, 2016, but was temporarily suspended by the White House on January 20, 2017, as part of a freeze on all new or pending government regulations. The rule will be reinstated on June 14, 2017. It requires most dental practices nationwide to install devices, called separators, to capture dental amalgam waste preventing its release to sewer systems. The rule includes reasonable exemptions, a phase-in period (through July 14, 2020) for existing dental offices and considerations for dental practices that have already installed the devices. As of July 14, 2017, new dental offices which discharge dental amalgam must comply immediately with the standards in this rule.

The ADA shares the EPA's goal of ensuring that dental amalgam waste is captured so that it may be recycled. The ADA originally commented on the draft regulation in February 2015. ADA representatives also met with the EPA and shared views and data as the process evolved. We commend the EPA for its consideration of the ADA's comments.

We believe this new rule—which is a federal standard—is preferable to a patchwork of rules and regulations across various states and localities.

Dental amalgam is a safe, affordable and durable cavity filling material comprised of a mixture of metals, including silver, copper, tin and mercury. Although less than one percent of mercury released to the environment from man-made sources comes from dentistry, the ADA has long recognized the importance of dentists being good stewards of the environment by capturing and recycling dental amalgam.

In 2002, long prior to federal regulation, the ADA published a set of voluntary guidelines for dentists on the capture and recycling of dental amalgam. In 2007, the ADA added to its guidelines the use of amalgam separators that comply with the International Organization for Standardization's (ISO) Standard 11143. The ADA is pleased to see that a number of provisions from the ADA guidelines are part of the new regulation.

The ADA has reviewed the rule and background statement in detail in order to develop practical resources posted at ADA.org/RecycleAmalgam. These resources are designed to aid member dentists with questions they may have regarding compliance. In addition, ADA's Business Resources has partnered with HealthFirst, a vendor that offers ADA

member dentists special pricing on an amalgam separator device that will meet the federal regulatory requirements along with recycling services.

Editor's Note: Reporters are invited to follow the ADA on Twitter @AmerDentalAssn

About the ADA

The not-for-profit ADA is the nation's largest dental association, representing 161,000 dentist members. The premier source of oral health information, the ADA has advocated for the public's health and promoted the art and science of dentistry since 1859. The ADA's state-of-the-art research facilities develop and test dental products and materials that have advanced the practice of dentistry and made the patient experience more positive. The ADA Seal of Acceptance long has been a valuable and respected guide to consumer dental care products. The monthly The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA) is the ADA's flagship publication and the best-read scientific journal in dentistry. For more information about the ADA, visit ADA.org. For more information on oral health, including prevention, care and treatment of dental disease, visit the ADA's consumer website MouthHealthy.org
