



Illinois Law Banning Lead and Mercury Wheel Weights Goes into Effect in January 2012 Frequently Asked Questions

On and after January 1, 2012, weights made of lead or mercury cannot be used to balance vehicle wheels or tires. On and after the same date, no one may sell or distribute wheel weights made of lead or mercury. Go to the end of this document to see the applicable law.

- **Why are wheel and tire balancing weights made of lead or mercury being banned?** Lead and mercury weights are used in the tire replacement market to balance tires of vehicles in the state. Although some effort is made to collect and recycle these weights at the end of a vehicle's life, they can fall off tires and then break down and contaminate soil, wash into sewers, or end up being transported to municipal landfills
- **How can I tell if a wheel weight contains lead?** Typically lead wheel weights are not marked. Steel weights usually are marked with "Fe" (for iron, the primary component of steel). Zinc weights are usually marked with "Zn." Both of these metals tend to be a little lighter in weight than those made of lead, so those weights should be larger than lead weights. You may want to contact the manufacturer if you have questions about the materials in your wheel weights.
- **How can I tell if a wheel weight contains mercury?** Mercury wheel weights are typically used on recreational vehicles, motorcycles and various sizes of trucks. They are intended to be permanent. The mercury is located in a neoprene tube that sits inside a balancing ring that clamps between the wheel and hub. Special care should be taken when removing and handling mercury weights.
- **Can I continue to sell or install my remaining inventory after January 1, 2012?** No, there is no grace period to sell, distribute or install after January 1, 2012. The law was enacted on July 26, 2010, which created a grace period of over one year. Persons using, selling and distributing lead or mercury wheel weights should base their purchase, sale, and use between now and January 1, 2012, on that deadline.
- **What should I do with unwanted stocks of lead or mercury wheel weights?** If you own stores in other states, consider shipping your stock to other states where the weights are allowed. If you do not have the option to ship to stores in other states, disposal options may include returning the wheel weights to your supplier to see if it will exchange them for the type that comply with the new law; sending them for recycling as scrap metal, which exempts them from hazardous waste regulation; and disposing of them as fully regulated hazardous waste. You should not discard them in the trash.
- **Do I have to remove the lead or mercury wheel weights that were placed on a vehicle before January 1, 2012?** No. But any replacement wheel weight installed after January 1, 2012, must be a wheel weight that does not contain lead or mercury.

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- **Can I sell a new vehicle with lead or mercury wheel weights after January 1, 2012?** No. Beginning January 1, 2012, new vehicles cannot be sold with lead or mercury wheels weights.
- **Can I sell a used vehicle with lead or mercury wheel weights after January 1, 2012?** Yes, if the wheel weights were installed prior to January 1, 2012.
- **What are the penalties for violating the ban on lead and mercury wheel weights?** A person violating this law is subject to a misdemeanor offense and may be penalized with a civil penalty up to \$50,000 for the violation and an additional civil penalty of not to exceed \$10,000 for each day during which the violation continues.

For further information on the lead and mercury wheel weight ban in Illinois, please contact Becky Jayne, Illinois EPA at Becky.Jayne@illinois.gov or (217) 524-9642.

Environmental Protection Act (415 Illinois Combined Statutes 5/22.23c)

Sec. 22.23c. Vehicle wheel weights.

(a) In this Section:

"New vehicle" has the same meaning as ascribed in Section 1-148.4 of the Illinois Vehicle Code.

"Vehicle" has the same meaning as ascribed in Section 1-217 of the Illinois Vehicle Code.

(b) On and after January 1, 2012, no person shall use a weight or other product to balance a vehicle wheel or tire if the weight or other product contains mercury that was intentionally added during the manufacturing process or contains more than 0.1 percent lead by weight.

(c) On and after January 1, 2012, no person shall sell, offer to sell, distribute, or offer to distribute a weight or other product for balancing a vehicle wheel or tire if the weight or other product contains mercury that was intentionally added during the manufacturing process or contains more than 0.1 percent lead by weight.

(d) On and after January 1, 2012, no person shall sell a new vehicle equipped with a weight or other product used to balance a vehicle wheel or tire if the weight or other product contains mercury that was intentionally added during the manufacturing process or contains more than 0.1 percent lead by weight.

(Source: P.A. 96-1296, eff. 7-26-10.)