

MEPs want mercury ban to cover healthcare devices

The Parliament's Environment committee voted, on 13 September 2006, in support of the Commission proposal (February 2006) to ban mercury in home thermometers. Mercury is highly toxic to humans and harmful to ecosystems. The MEPs also voted to amend the Commission proposal to extend the ban on mercury-containing devices, to cover professional healthcare devices.

However, the Committee voted against the Commission's proposal to ban all barometers, the instruments used to measure atmospheric pressure, for public sale. The Committee wants to allow the sale of small barometers.

Health and environment NGOs welcome the widening of the scope of the ban to cover the professional healthcare sector, but urge the Council and the Parliament plenary to follow the Commission's proposal on small barometers.

The Parliament is set to vote on the issue on 25 October and the Council is expected to reach a political agreement on common position on 4 December 2006.

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