Concern about the effects of mercury in the environment has increased over the years. Mercury in the form of amalgam is commonly introduced into dental wastewater as a result of amalgam placements and removals.

**Mandatory Amalgam Best Management Practices (BMPs) For Minimization of Mercury in Wastewater Discharges from Dental Practices**

Concern about the effects of mercury in the environment has increased over the years.

1. The American Dental Association (ADA) discourages the use of bulk elemental mercury, also referred to as liquid or raw mercury, for use in dental offices. Any bulk elemental mercury must be recycled or disposed of as hazardous waste. **Do not pour bulk elemental mercury waste in the garbage containers, red bags or down the drain.**

2. Use precapsulated alloys and stock a variety of capsules sizes on hand to more closely match the amount triturated to the amount needed in the restoration in order to minimize the amount of amalgam waste generated. Recycle used disposable amalgam capsules. **Do not put used disposable amalgam capsules in biohazard containers, infectious waste containers (red bags) or regular garbage containers.**

3. Install plastic disposable chair-side amalgam traps in both the vacuum system and cuspidor of each operatory where restoration work is done. Change these chair-side amalgam traps frequently. **Recycle the content of the traps. Never rinse these traps in the sink.**

4. Change vacuum pump filters and screens at least once per month or as directed by the manufacturer. Carefully seal the vacuum screen in its plastic container, including any water that may be present, and store it in an airtight container with other amalgam waste for recycling purposes.

5. Refrain from using sodium hypochlorite (bleach) to disinfect vacuum lines. The use of bleach speeds the release of mercury in the sewer system.

6. Consider installing an approved amalgam separator in the vacuum line at each chair or in a central location that receives vacuum line wastewater from all chairs to **remove amalgam waste particles from dental office wastewater.** Contact a dental equipment supplier, vendor or the manufacturer of the amalgam separator to confirm
that the amalgam separator you have selected from the approved list is compatible with your system and appropriate for your office. Make arrangement for proper and regular monitoring and maintenance of the unit.

7 Contact an amalgam waste recycler about any special requirements that may exist for collecting, storing and transporting amalgam waste. It is important to select a reputable amalgam recycler that complies with applicable federal and state laws and provides adequate indemnification for its acts and omissions. A directory of Amalgam Recyclers has been compiled from information supplied by companies listed in website and other public information sources at the American Dental Association (ADA) website: www.ada.org.

Amalgam waste includes:
- Non-contact amalgam (scrap): excess mix leftover at the end of a dental procedure. Many recyclers will buy this clean scrap.
- Contact amalgam: amalgam that has been in contact with the patient (e.g., extracted teeth containing amalgam)
- Amalgam sludge: amalgam captured by chair-side traps, vacuum pump filters, screens, and other devices.
- Used amalgam capsules
- Leaking or unusable amalgam capsules

8 Store amalgam waste in a covered plastic container dated and labeled “Amalgam for Recycling” or as directed by your recycler. Consider keeping different types (e.g., contact and non-contact) of amalgam wastes in separate containers as instructed by your recycler. Do not use disinfectant solutions with oxidizers, such as bleach, to disinfect the amalgam. Do not add water or waste fixer to the waste containers.

9 Obtain receipts or other certified documentation such as hauling manifests from your recycler or hazardous waste hauler for disposal of all amalgam waste. Keep these receipts on file for at least three years, and make them available to authorized City inspectors upon request. Maintain a written or computerized log of amalgam waste that you generate and you dispose off.

10 Store your waste fixer solution in a properly labeled container and dispose of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler/recycler. Waste fixer solution may be treated on-site using a Silver Recovery Unit.

11 Train staff in the proper handling, management, and disposal of mercury-containing solutions. Maintain a training log.

For more information, contact
Water Resources Protection Programs: 310-458-8235