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### Mercury switch program lands at 1M milestone

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By Paul Schaffer

**New York** -- The National Vehicle Mercury Switch Recovery Program and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will salute a milestone Friday: the removal of the millionth switch.

The symbolic switch removal will be done at the Conley, Ga., branch of Atlanta-based Pull-A-Part LLC, which stocks end-of-life vehicles from which customers can remove reusable parts.

The program, organized in mid-2006 with an initial goal of collecting 4 million switches in the first three years, aims to keep mercury, a health hazard, from polluting the air when recyclable metal is melted. The program had recovered 998,450 switches—containing about 2,197 pounds of mercury—through the end of last week.

The program reports adherents in all states except Maine, which set up an independent program several years earlier. In nine states, participants have yet to turn in switches, with dismantlers often accumulating large inventories before forwarding the devices to the program. Some states were late starters, joining the program in August and September of 2007.

The program depends on cooperation from shredder operators, processors, brokers, environmental groups and state officials. Yards selling crushed cars to shredders must remove the switches before crushing.

The first three years of the program includes bounties to dismantlers of \$1 for a simple switch and \$3 for antilock brakes. The money comes from a start-up fund of \$2 million each from automakers and steel mills, and whether those bounties will continue is unclear.

Steven Levetan, senior vice president of Pull-A-Part and former legislative affairs director for the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries' Southeast Chapter, will host Friday's event, which will be attended by EPA administrator Stephen L. Johnson.

The EPA opted for the removal of switches from raw scrap partly due to the ineffectiveness of anti-mercury pollution control efforts applied to furnace emissions. Some technology advances have occurred, but existing rules won't be revisited for several years, the EPA said.

Mercury switches were almost universal in cars until 1989 and weren't fully phased out until the end of the 2003 model year.

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