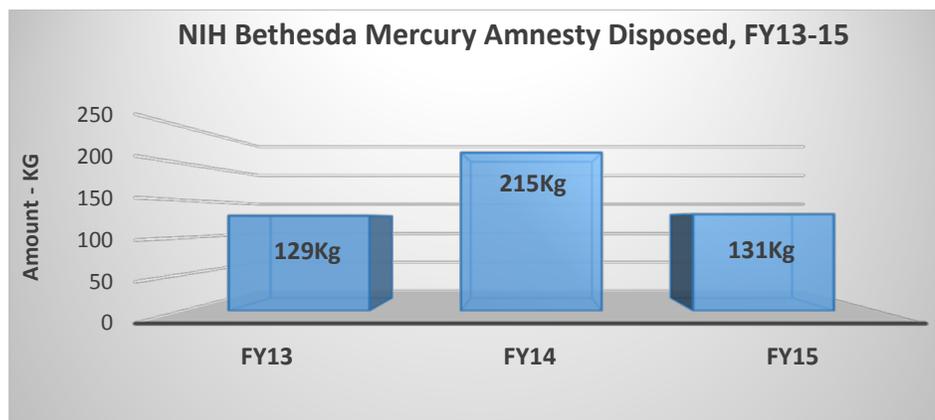


NIH MERCURY AMNESTY PROGRAM

The **NIH Mercury Amnesty Program** was implemented to support the Toxic Chemical Reduction Initiative and ensure compliance with [NIH's Mercury-Free Policy: NIH Manual Issuance 3033](#). Mercury and its compounds are neurotoxic, bioaccumulative and persistent in the environment and subject to strict regulations governing their use and disposal. Thus, it is the policy of the NIH to prohibit all unnecessary acquisition of mercury, mercury related products and compounds to reduce risk, protect workers' health and the environment, and comply with applicable regulations. Alternatives are available for most uses of Mercury. See the [Listings of Alternatives for Mercury Added and Mercury Contaminated Products](#). The policy also requires use of mercury to be registered and approved by the ORF Division of Environmental Protection by completing the [NIH Application for Special Exception for Procurement and Use of Mercury](#). The culmination of which is to track labs that are approved to use mercury and its compounds, and educate the unapproved labs that request for cleanup service during mercury or broken thermometer spills about the policy.

Thus, in June 2012 the Division of Environmental Protection (DEP) embarked on a Mercury "Turn-in" Amnesty Event (collection of mercury items) on the NIH Bethesda main campus at selected buildings. The perpetual program runs throughout the year with the services of the Chemical Waste Services (CWS) contractor but the DEP collection event is during the spring and summer months. The program was promoted by sending [emails](#) to all lab managers and posting flyers and posters at respective buildings a week prior to the date of the event. The promotions help remind some researchers to call CWS and get rid of their unwanted mercury items prior to the event dates. DEP staff visited most labs at the building during a scheduled time period to collect and facilitate proper disposal of any mercury-containing items or mercury compounds.

Labs with limited scientific and medical uses of mercury or mercury compounds for which there are no alternatives were approved for special exceptions by the DEP director or designee through the mandated application process. The Mercury Amnesty Program which was simultaneously conducted with the annual laboratory chemical waste management inspection yield significant waste disposal results and several researchers were registered and approved with special exceptions for procurement and use of mercury. The approved special exceptions are furnished to procurement official in order to authorize the procurement of mercury added products. The NIH Mercury Amnesty Program is a revival of [NIH's \(Mad as a Hatter\) Mercury-Free Campaign](#) and will continue annually until all the labs on the Bethesda campus and NIH leased facilities are compliant with the NIH's Mercury-Free Policy found in NIH Manual Chapter 3033.



A [Mercury "Turn-in" Amnesty](#) event was conducted at the NIH Twinbrook facilities in Rockville on April 2012 which was supported by the NIAID director and produced excellent results. Accomplishment of Toxic Chemical Reduction Initiatives requires the help of researchers who support NIH's mission to protect the environment and use our natural resources responsibly.