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Kent County Changing Battery Collection Program

Grand Rapids – For the past 25 years Kent County provided a battery collection program in partnership with Kent District Libraries and several area businesses for proper disposal of batteries especially those containing mercury. Beginning August 15, 2015 Kent County will transition to a new partnership with **call2recycle** collection sites.

Kent County had nearly thirty locations to collect batteries to divert them from the Kent County Waste-to-Energy Facility. Kent District Libraries (KDL) **will no longer** accept any kind of battery starting August 15. Other sites accepting alkaline batteries will phase out by the end of the year.

The battery collection program was implemented in 1990 when the Kent County Waste-to-Energy (WTE) Facility opened and mercury was still added to alkaline batteries by many manufacturers. Mercury is a source of air pollution. The “Mercury-Containing and Rechargeable Battery Management Act,” signed into Congress in 1996, required the phase-out of mercury in most batteries. With changes in battery chemistries alkaline batteries are now safe for the trash.

Rechargeable batteries containing heavy metals need to be collected and recycled. **Call2recycle** has 27 retail locations around Kent County accepting rechargeable batteries including nickel cadmium (Ni-Cd), lithium ion (Li-ion), small sealed lead acid (SSLA/PB) (up to 11 pounds), nickel metal hydride (Ni-MH) and nickel zinc (Ni-ZN) batteries free of charge. These sites are members of the national program **call2recycle**, a coalition of battery and product manufacturers funding responsible recycling of rechargeable batteries. Kent County is looking for additional sites to join the program providing residents convenient locations to recycle rechargeable batteries.

“This change reflects current battery disposal needs and is being implemented after significant dialog, discussions with existing collection site managers, and review of best management practices for battery disposal,” said Kristen Wieland, Community Relations Coordinator for the Department of Public Works, who manages the program.

“Partnering agencies at nearly thirty collection sites participated with us for twenty-five years and the community embraced battery recycling. Our focus is environmental protection - collecting batteries that contain heavy metals and can be reclaimed. Kent County’s household hazardous waste program continues to collect rechargeable batteries, mercury-containing devices and harmful household chemicals that are unwanted,” said Wieland.

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