Fact Sheet, June 2010
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California Law Prohibits the Manufacture, Sale or Distribution of Lead Wheel Weights



Lead can contaminate drinking water and is highly toxic, especially to children. Wheel weights that have fallen off during use, or that have been disposed of improperly, are a significant source of lead in drinking water.

As of Jan. 1, 2010, anyone servicing or replacing tires in California must use weights of a material other than lead[1]. Manufacturers and distributors now sell weights made of steel, zinc alloy and other materials as alternatives.

You should not discard your used or unused lead wheel weights in the trash or use them for any other purpose. You may contact your supplier to see if it will take back your lead wheel weights, or you may have them recycled as scrap metal. Alternative weights should be recycled as well.

Proper installation reduces losses on the road

Proper wheel weight application is crucial to ensuring that the weight stays on the wheel during use. Because steel or zinc clip-on weights may not be as malleable as lead weights, the clip style must match the wheel flange. If the wrong clip is applied, it is more likely to fall off the wheel. If the weights do not easily clip onto the rim, check the application chart to find the appropriate weight, or apply an adhesive weight to the cleaned wheel.

Also, reusing clip-on weights is not advisable because the spring in the clip weakens after repeated application, which also increases the chances of it falling off. Wheel weight loss not only contaminates drinking water, but also leads to excessive tire wear and lower fuel mileage.

Buying lead-free wheel weights

It is important to purchase your weights through a reputable source that is aware of the lead ban because you will be held liable for the weights applied by your shop. A person violating this law may be penalized up to $2,500 per day per violation (California Health and Safety Code Section 25215.7).

For more information, go to www.dtsc.ca.gov and search for "wheel weights" or call the Department of Toxic Substances Control at (800) 728-6942.

To file a complaint, call (800) 698-6942 or go to the "complaint information" section of the form found here: www.dtsc.ca.gov/database/CalEPA_Complaint/index.cfm.

[1] As of Jan. 1, 2010, California law (Health and Safety Code Section 25215.6) prohibits the manufacture, sale or installation of wheel weights that contain more than 0.1 percent lead.