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***ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS CALL ON AUTOMAKERS
TO REPLACE TOXIC MERCURY***

Groups Applaud Similar Call To Ford By State Attorneys General

(July 2, 2001 -- Washington) The Clean Car Campaign, with the support of 26 environmental organizations, today called on Ford and other automakers to remove toxic mercury from vehicles in for service, repair, or recall. The Campaign also endorses a similar call by 26 state attorneys general urging Ford to remove mercury-containing devices as part of their Firestone tire recall. Mercury is a potent toxic chemical that causes brain, lung and kidney damage in humans. The substance has been used in switches for hood and trunk convenience lighting, and in other devices, becoming a contaminant when vehicles are scrapped.

The Clean Car Campaign today sent letters to the heads of Ford, DaimlerChrysler and GM asking the auto industry to show leadership in getting the toxic substance out of the environment by having dealers remove switches for free when vehicles come in for service. "It's time for automakers to take responsibility for the environmental hazards of their vehicles," said Charles Griffith, Auto Project Director at the Ecology Center. "By replacing these mercury switches they can protect the environment *and* consumers with a simple, affordable fix."

Twenty-six state attorneys general today sent a letter to Ford's Chairman and CEO (William Clay Ford, Jr. and Jacques Nasser) asking the company to replace mercury lighting switches in vehicles recalled to replace Firestone tires. "New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and the other attorneys general should be commended for their leadership in promoting a workable plan to recover automotive mercury," said Michael Bender, Director of the Mercury Policy Project.

The AG's recommended replacements would remove up to 2.5 tons of mercury from the environment. "Ford could show real leadership among automakers by replacing not just the tires but also the toxic mercury," said Dean Menke, an engineer with Environmental Defense.

Concerns about exposure to mercury have grown in recent years, with many states and stores banning mercury thermometers. More than forty states have issued fish consumption advisories for mercury, and the National Academy of Sciences 2000 mercury report found that more than 60,000 children may suffer from exposure to mercury while the womb. Mercury can cause neurological problems that range from mild learning disabilities to mental retardation. The most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control indicates that as many as one in ten women of childbearing age are at risk of having newborns with neurological problems.

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Despite growing concerns about the fate of mercury devices now contained in automobiles, very little has been done to date to rectify the problem, and automakers have generally pushed the problem off on auto dismantlers to deal with. The Campaign proposes a national program for collecting up to 90% of the mercury switches now on the road, that includes working with *both* auto dealers and recyclers. The plan seeks to maximize the recovery of mercury by getting automakers to start with their own dealers to remove and replace the switches whenever a vehicle is brought in to be serviced or is recalled.

The Campaign released two reports earlier this year that document the continued use of mercury in automobiles and show automobiles to be one of the nation's largest sources of airborne mercury emissions, just behind power plants and incinerators. Estimates suggest that up to 10 tons of toxic mercury may be released each year when vehicles are scrapped; nearly 200 tons of mercury are contained in vehicles currently on the road. The full text of the studies, as well as the letters being sent today, can be found at: <http://www.cleancarcampaign.org/mercury.html>

The Clean Car Campaign is a national campaign coordinated by state, regional and national environmental organizations promoting a clean revolution in the motor vehicle industry. For more information, please visit the campaign's website, at: <http://www.cleancarcampaign.org/>

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