



Coordinating Organizations

American Council for an
..Energy Efficient Economy
Ecology Center
Environmental Defense Fund
Great Lakes United
Michigan Environmental Council
Union of Concerned Scientists

June 27, 2001

Mr. William Clay Ford, Jr.
Chairman of the Board
Ford World Headquarters
The American Road
Dearborn, MI 48121-1899

Mr. Jacques Nasser
President and CEO
Ford World Headquarters
The American Road
Dearborn, MI 48121-1899

Mr. Juergen E. Schrempp
Chairman
DaimlerChrysler Hqts, USA
1000 Chrysler Drive
Auburn Hills, MI 48326

Mr. Dieter Zetsche
President and CEO
DaimlerChrysler Hqtrs, USA
1000 Chrysler Drive
Auburn Hills, MI 48326

Mr. John F. Smith, Jr.
Chairman
General Motors Headquarters
300 Renaissance Center
Detroit, MI 48243

Mr. G. Richard Wagoner, Jr.
President and CEO
General Motors Headquarters
300 Renaissance Center
Detroit, MI 48243

Re: Replacement of Mercury-Containing Devices in the N. American Vehicle Fleet

Dear Auto Industry Leaders:

We are writing to strongly urge you to take responsibility for removing and properly managing mercury switches and other mercury-containing devices in vehicles when they are serviced or recalled for any reason. At the same time, we encourage you to eliminate all remaining mercury uses in new cars--consistent with the goals embraced by governments of the United States and Canada for the virtual elimination of anthropogenic mercury.

A national program to replace mercury-containing devices in automobiles currently on the road is critically needed at this time to "jump start" mercury recovery efforts for automobiles throughout North America, as well as to ensure that all responsible parties take advantage of opportunities to recover the greatest amount of mercury. Presently, a fifteen-year "window" of opportunity exists to capture this deadly toxin from America's cars and trucks before it is haphazardly emitted into the environment, threatening public health and wildlife. Without an effective auto switch collection program, the current U.S. auto fleet of 210 million vehicles containing as much as 200 tons of mercury will continue to contribute to the tons of mercury emitted each year to the environment. Based on the industry's own estimates for quantities used in vehicles in 1995, **approximately ten tons of mercury annually** is unaccounted for, and likely emitted, when vehicles are scrapped or recycled.

Clean Car Campaign

117 N. Division
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 663-2400

Suite 1016
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 387-3500

www.cleancarcampaign.org
info@cleancarcampaign.org

Automobiles are a significant source of U.S. mercury emissions when steel recovered from scrapped automobiles is melted down in electric arc furnaces. In New Jersey (and perhaps in other states), steel and aluminum smelters handling automobile and appliance scrap are now the largest mercury emission source—higher than coal combustion or waste incineration.

Concern over toxic mercury emissions has risen with recent reports that mercury releases from human activities have increased 2-to-5-fold over the last century and are now high enough to threaten human health, cause

learning disabilities in children, and endanger wildlife species, such as loons, that absorb mercury compounds from the fish they eat. The congressionally-mandated National Academy of Sciences July 2000 report, *The Toxicological Effects of Mercury*, found that more than 60,000 children may suffer from exposure to methylmercury while in-utero. In January 2001, the Food & Drug Administration warned pregnant women not to eat certain seafood due to high mercury levels, and over forty states have issued fish consumption advisories to restrict or completely avoid eating fish due to high levels of mercury in the environment attributable, in part, to disposal of mercury products like mercury-containing switches and HID lamps in cars. Given the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control in March 2001 indicating that one in ten women of childbearing age are at risk of having newborns with neurological problems, much more needs to be done to reduce and eliminate mercury uses, emissions and exposure risks.

Unfortunately, decisions by auto makers to continue using mercury in vehicles a decade or more after there were known human health risks has contributed to perpetuating a large-scale mercury contamination problem across the United States and Canada. Although we understand that most mercury switches will be phased out over the next few years, this does not relieve the industry from responsibility for recovery of mercury switches now on the road. In previous communications to your companies (see attached), the Clean Car Campaign recommended a program to achieve high mercury recovery rates from vehicles both on and off the road. In addition, over 3,400 concerned individuals asked U.S. automakers through the Alliance for Automobile Manufacturers to establish an "in-use" mercury collection system working with their dealers. In order to successfully recover 90% of the mercury in vehicles, automakers must be an active part of the solution--including when vehicles are brought in to be serviced or are recalled.

Clearly, there is a growing bi-national consensus that we must phase out all nonessential mercury uses in order to virtually eliminate anthropogenic mercury and reduce human and wildlife exposures to mercury. We believe it is imperative for the automobile industry to find alternatives for all mercury uses--and we ask for your commitment to do so--along with assuming either physical or financial responsibility for removing all vehicular mercury sources prior to scrap car processing.

We look forward to hearing your response to this very important problem.

Sincerely,

Michael T. Bender
Executive Director
Mercury Policy Project

Margaret Wooster
Executive Director
Great Lakes United

Eric Uram
Sierra Club Midwest Office
Madison, WI

Jeremiah Baumann
Clean Air Issues
U.S. PIRG/
The National Association of State PIRGs

Charles Griffith
Auto Project Director
Ecology Center

Dean Menke
Staff Engineer
Environmental Defense

Kathleen McGee
Executive Director
Maine Toxics Action Coalition

Robert M. Gould, M.D.
President
San Francisco Bay Area Physicians
for Social Responsibility

Joanna Underwood
President
Inform, Inc.

Sanford Lewis
Attorney
Good Neighbor Project

Dana Sevakis
Executive Director
Chicago Recycling Coalition

Shawn Hupka
President
Citizens Environment Alliance

Leah Hagreen
Project Manager
Pollution Probe

Val Washington
Executive Director
Environmental Advocates of New York State

Wil Cwikiel
Water Resource Program Director
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

John Witucki
Citizens for Alt's to Chemical Contamination
Lake, Michigan

Elizabeth Wessel
Executive Director
Wisconsin's Environmental Decade

Elliot Levinsohn
Manager, Air Quality & Environmental Health
American Lung Association of Michigan

Kurt Waltzer
Clean Air Program Manager
Ohio Environmental Council

Molly Turnbull
Director
Alberta Forest Conservation Association

Isaac Elnecave
Policy Specialist
Michigan Environmental Council

Bill Ravanese
Health Care Without Harm
Boston, MA

Jonathan Parfrey
Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility-L.A

Laura Weiss
Pesticides and Toxics Program Citizens
Oregon Environmental Council

Shiela Dormody
Rhode Island Director
Clean Water Action

Marguerite Young
California Director
Clean Water Action

John Reindl, PE
Recycling Manager
Dane County, Wisconsin

John Blair, President
Valley Watch, Inc.
Evansville, IN

Teresa M. Olle
Toxics Policy Advocate & Staff Attorney
CALPIRG

W. Robert Campbell
Coordinator, Clean Air Issues
Sierra Club, NJ Chapter

Joan K. Bowden
46 Somerset Avenue
Riverside, RI

Alex McPherson
Director
Clean Production Network

Enclosure: *National Mercury Collection Program for Automotive Switches*