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## FACT SHEET: Hospitals For a Healthy Environment (H2E)<sup>1</sup>

*Voluntary Partnership with the American Hospital Association to Reduce Hospital Waste*

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### MISSION

Work in voluntary partnership with the American Hospital Association and its member hospitals to:

- ▶ Virtually eliminate mercury waste generated by hospitals by 2005;
- ▶ Reduce overall hospital waste volume by 33 percent by 2005, and 50 percent by 2010; and
- ▶ Jointly identify additional substances to target for pollution prevention and waste reduction opportunities

### BACKGROUND

Medical waste incinerators are the fourth largest known releasers of mercury to the environment, constituting approximately 10 percent of all emissions sources, and hospitals are responsible for producing one percent of the total municipal solid waste in the entire country.

The U S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in an effort to protect the American people and the environment, has been working in recent years to reduce mercury releases into the environment. For example, EPA recently wrote new air regulations targeting mercury reduction from medical waste incinerators, and have been working to stem mercury releases through the 1997 Canada-U.S. Binational Toxics Strategy.

The American Hospital Association (AHA) is a national organization that represents and serves nearly 5,000 hospitals, health care networks, and their patients and communities. On June 24, 1998, the AHA and the EPA, in consultation with Healthcare Without Harm, reached this landmark agreement that launched the Hospitals for a Healthy Environment program.

### NON-GOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS

Environmental and public health non-profit organizations, local government agencies; state and metropolitan health care associations; health care environmental services directors, health care material managers, physicians, nurses and, waste management industry representatives, and product manufacturers.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

- ▶ Formed multi-stakeholder workgroups to help meet the goals set out in the agreement.
- ▶ Created and administered a data collection survey to establish a baseline for the average annual amount of waste generated at a hospital. This data will be used to gauge the overall success of this program in helping hospitals reduce waste.
- ▶ Received the Vice Presidential Hammer Award for excellence in government innovation in March 1999.
- ▶ Developed a clearinghouse of technical assistance providers
- ▶ Launched the H2E web site  
<http://www.h2e-online.org>
- ▶ Created a display booth, brochure and other promotional materials that is available for outreach effort.
- ▶ Initiated a pledge program for hospitals to pledge to be a Hospital for a Healthy Environment and work to reduce the waste they generate in treating patients.

### NEXT STEPS

- ▶ Develop and distribute the "How to Reduce Hospital Waste Guide" to hospitals nationally through both the electronic and print media. The guide outlines how to reduce hospital mercury and solid waste and buy environmentally preferable products.
- ▶ Compile baseline data survey results by Spring 2001. Data to be posted on H2E website.
- ▶ Create national training programs for hospitals based on the H2E Manual and other products developed by the project;
- ▶ Work with State technical assistance providers to provide pollution prevention assistance to hospitals
- ▶ Launch a national awards program.