



Minnesota Law Prohibits the Sale and Installation of Lead Wheel Weights

Effective January 1, 2016



Frequently asked questions

This fact sheet is an abbreviated version of information available on the MPCA website at www.pca.state.mn.us/wheel-weights. See this webpage for a list of non-lead products available from several manufacturers and the text of the 2014 law.

The 2014 Minnesota Legislature enacted a law addressing the use of lead in wheel balancing products and equipment.

Effective January 1, 2016, wheel weights containing lead cannot be used to balance vehicle wheels and tires in Minnesota. In addition, no one may sell or distribute wheel balancing weights or equipment containing lead to end-users within the state.

Why are wheel balancing weights made of lead being banned?

Lead weights are used in the replacement tire market to balance wheels and tires. Lead is highly toxic and non-toxic alternative products are readily available at lower cost and with superior performance. A significant percentage of lead wheel weights fall off during use and contaminate soil and water. Lead wheel weights are often mismanaged at the end of product life when taken out of service. Employees in the tire and wheel service industry who handle these products can be exposed and can also bring contamination home with them.

What are vehicle manufacturers selling on new cars?

Most new cars and light trucks sold in the US have steel or zinc wheel weights. All new cars and light trucks sold in the US have been free of lead wheel weights since 2009. Vehicle manufacturers made a significant commitment to phase out this use of lead. The use of lead in the replacement tire balancing market reverses the environmental commitments and investments made by new vehicle manufacturers to equip new vehicles with lead-free products.

Where can I purchase lead-free products?

All companies that currently supply wheel weights to Minnesota customers will be making the change to lead-free products. Contact your current supplier and ask about lead-free products that are comparable to what you are currently buying from them and installing on your customers' vehicles. Other suppliers may have products that work well for your business.

How can I tell if a wheel weight contains lead?

Lead wheel weights are generally not marked for their material content. They are softer and denser so they are smaller than steel or zinc items with the same weight. Steel weights may be marked 'FE,' 'S,' or 'ST,' and zinc weights may be marked 'ZN' or 'Z.' Weights may also have a mark indicating their 'clip profile' for use on specific types of wheels, for example, 'MC,' 'AW' or 'P.'

Can I continue to sell my remaining inventory after January 1, 2016?

The law prohibits the sale, distribution, and use of lead-containing wheel weights within the state as of January 1, 2016. The law does not explicitly prohibit the sale and distribution of lead wheel weights to end-users outside of the state after January 1, 2016.



Do I have to remove lead wheel weights installed on a vehicle before January 1, 2016?

No, the law does not prohibit the use of lead wheel weights installed on a vehicle prior to January 1, 2016.

Can I sell a new vehicle with lead wheel weights?

No. New motor vehicles may not be sold with lead wheel weights as of January 1, 2016.

Can I sell a used vehicle with lead wheel weights?

A used vehicle may be sold with lead wheel weights if they were installed before January 1, 2016.

Does the law require the use of any particular type of wheel weight?

No, the law does not require the use of particular materials in wheel weights. Clip-on weights are available in steel and zinc. Adhesive weights are available in steel, zinc, and a high density polymer composite. Other non-toxic products may be available for a variety of applications. See the MPCA wheel weights webpage for additional information.

Does the law apply to other vehicles, including trucks, off-road vehicles, and aircraft?

The law applies to weights used to balance wheels and tires on any vehicle, regardless of the vehicle type or licensing status, including aircraft and watercraft. See the definition of 'vehicle' in the law.



Are non-lead weights available for medium and heavy duty truck wheels?

Yes, products are available. For example, Plombco makes steel adhesive and coated/uncoated zinc clip-on weights (1-8 ounces) for truck wheels; Bada makes coated steel clip-on weights (2-8 ounces) for truck wheels; and WEGMANN automotive offers Perfect Equipment coated steel adhesive strip (0.5-12 ounces) and the Hofmann Power Weight line of coated/uncoated zinc clip-on weights (0.5-6 ounces) and a non-toxic balancing compound that is put inside the tire. KTB Products makes a non-toxic liquid balancing product that is put inside the tire. Other products may be available.



What should I do with unwanted stocks of lead wheel weights after January 1, 2016?

If you have other locations outside of Minnesota, lead weights may be shipped there for use after January 1 2016. Otherwise the MPCA recommends either 1) working with your supplier to return any unused weights to your supplier, or 2) recycling your lead wheel weights to safely recover the lead and remove the lead wheel weights from commerce. The major lead wheel weight manufacturers offer recycling programs for their customers. Lead wheel weights may also be recycled through the state's network of 'Very Small Quantity Generator' waste collection programs. See MPCA fact sheet 2. 51 "VSQG Collection Program Requirements/VSQG Programs Licensed to Operate in Minnesota." <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=12875>.



Does the law require the recycling of used wheel weights?

Yes, the law requires the recycling of all used wheel weights that contain lead. Consult with your wheel weight supplier(s) and manufacturer(s) to determine what recycling programs they offer. Zinc weights can contaminate lead that is collected for recycling, so it is important to work with a manufacturer or recycling contractor that can properly handle mixed weights for recycling. Steel weights can be magnetically separated from zinc and lead so they are not a recycling contaminant.

Additional information on this issue can be found on the webpage for the US EPA National Lead Free Wheel Weight Initiative, announced August 29, 2008: <http://www.epa.gov/wastes/hazard/wastemin/nlffwwi.htm>.