

Amalgam separators update

March 14, 2006

AMALGAM SEPARATORS TO BE REQUIRED

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has recently announced new regulations that will require most New York state dentists to install amalgam separators in their dental offices. The regulations also require and detail the proper recycling of amalgam. It is estimated that the regulations will become effective in June, 2006 and that separators must be installed within two years for any dental office that uses or removes amalgam. Once the regulations are published in the New York State register, NYSDA will summarize and provide specific details about the requirements with its members.

FACTS:

Separators must be installed within two years from the effective date of the regulations (June 2008)

Pertains to any dental facility that applies, alters, maintains, removes or disposes of dental amalgam waste

Specialists that are exempt: Orthodontists, Periodontists, Prosthodontists, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

Separators must be 99% or more efficient for most offices. Dental facilities with 50+ chairs need only be at least 95% efficient

Separator waste must be disposed within one year

Dentists must send amalgam waste for mercury recycling and keep a written certification of such recycling in their records

Dentists must notify local sewer authority of the separator installation

New dental offices opening after effective date of regulations are required to include the separators at the outset

Amalgam waste cannot be disposed of in normal trash or medical waste containers, nor can it be sterilized in an autoclave

Elemental mercury (except pre-encapsulated) is banned from dental offices

What Will it Cost?

In supporting documentation, DEC indicates that the cost to New York State dentists would be \$1,229 for the first year and \$133 per year after that. Despite the apparent precision of these numbers, the costs will vary throughout the state. The first year numbers do match up, however, with our own estimates at NYSDA. A separator unit from Solmetex, Inc., for example, costs \$695. Their cartridge is \$150 plus another \$100 to have the sludge recycled. A couple hours of plumbing to install the unit could cost roughly \$250, which adds

up to \$1,200. An additional \$250 for a cartridge and recycling can be expected each year thereafter based upon an average four chair practice.

The cost of the plumbing installation will vary somewhat between downstate and upstate regions, but the install time should be roughly two hours in most cases. Some buildings or vacuum pumps may require more labor, and some members will be able to install the units themselves. After the first year, the only ongoing costs will be for recycling and filter replacement.

For more information on the regulations, dentists can call DEC at (518) 402-8705 or by e-mail at: dshmwrr@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

NYSDA Support Services, Inc. has endorsed Solmetex, Inc. as a preferred amalgam recycler and members receive a free cartridge with the purchase of any separator. Solmetex can be contacted at 800-216-5505.