Dear Tanning Salon Owner,

The Town of Amherst Health Department and the Center for Ecological Technology (CET), a local non-profit organization, are working together to make it easier for you to recycle tanning bulbs that contain mercury. Disposing of these bulbs in the trash is prohibited by state and federal regulations (310 CMR 30), and enforced by Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The Town of Amherst requires all businesses to dispose of spent bulbs appropriately.

CET can help you comply with federal and state regulations regarding lighting waste. With funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), CET will provide technical assistance to your business at no charge. CET’s role is non-regulatory. For over 27 years, CET has helped municipalities, businesses and institutions manage waste responsibly.

Each lamp used in the tanning process contains mercury. Recycling the lamps makes a significant difference in our community and at your business. When an employee throws bulbs into a compactor or dumpster, the broken bulbs release mercury vapors that can be inhaled by anyone in the area. Once in the trash, the mercury is transported to landfills or incinerators where it is released into the air and soil, eventually ending up in lakes and streams. Once in our waterways, mercury starts the journey into the food chain. Most people are exposed to mercury from eating contaminated fish.

Even small quantities of mercury are extremely toxic and can harm the human nervous system, vision and hearing. Mercury is especially dangerous for children and fetuses. The Center for Disease Control estimates that one in six American women of childbearing age have high enough mercury levels to put their fetuses at risk of brain or nervous system damage.

In the coming weeks, you will receive a follow up call from Lorenzo Macaluso, CET’s Waste Management Specialist. He can help you determine the best way to address issues like proper storage, space constraints, cost and liability.

I encourage you to work with Mr. Macaluso to establish a recycling program if you do not already have one in place. If you are already recycling, you may still benefit from a visit from Mr. Macaluso. He has saved many businesses money on their recycling costs. He also has many helpful hints on storage and compliance. Remember, he is from a non-regulatory organization.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Together, we can make Amherst a safer place to live and work.

Sincerely,

Amherst Health Inspector