

LAND

Fact Sheet | September 2009

Mercury Spill Cleanup Instructions

Follow these instructions for small, new spills to minimize the health hazard. Call DEQ for additional instructions at 405-702-5100

The main danger from spilled mercury is the inhalation of mercury vapors. You cannot see or smell the vapors, but they are present. Mercury vaporizes at room temperature and will easily migrate through your home. If you spill more

than 2 tablespoons of mercury or you spill it into the carpeting, upholstered furniture, other porous surface, or into the drain, immediately call the DEQ hotline at 1-800-522-0206, so a mercury expert can assist you.

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DO

- Turn off central heating and cooling system.
- Children, pregnant women, and pets should leave the area.
- Open the windows and doors for ventilation.
- Use flashlight to find mercury beads.
- If spilled on hard surface, use a piece of stiff paper or cardboard to push the beads together into a larger bead. Push the large bead onto another piece of paper being careful not to drop it and place it into a container that has a tight fitting lid (glass jar or plastic container). Place the container, paper or other items that came in contact with the mercury into a zipper-lock plastic bag. For added protection, double bag the contents.
- Other options: medicine droppers, turkey basters, electrical or duct tape, and sulfur powder. Sulfur binds to the mercury and a color change from yellow to brown occurs. Sulfur may be obtained from lawn and garden centers. (Note that sometimes the suction created by the medicine dropper and turkey baster is not strong enough to hold the mercury, so hold them low and parallel to the floor during use.)
- If spilled over drain, remove the 'j' or 's' traps - put a sheet of plastic or a plastic tray under the work area to catch any mercury that might fall.
- If the spill is on carpet, cut out and remove any contaminated carpet and padding. Immediately place the contaminated piece into a trash bag. Keep the bag upright, so mercury cannot run out the opening. Tape the opening shut.
- Move contaminated furniture, clothing, and other porous materials that came in contact with the mercury outside to air out.
- Check your clothing and the bottom of your shoes for visible mercury remove any droplets, and place these items outside to air out.

DON'T

- **Do not** vacuum the area.
- **Do not** use mops, brooms or brushes.
- **Do not** use household cleaning agents that contain chlorine or ammonia.
- **Do not** pour down drain.
- **Never** wash mercury-contaminated items in a washing machine.
- **Do not** attempt to cleanup a large spill of mercury more than one pound (two tablespoons).
- **Do not** attempt to cleanup old spills - the mercury has had time to permeate the area and a health hazard exists - call DEQ for assistance.
- **Do not** keep or reuse items used to clean up the spill.



Disposal

- Place the mercury and all items that came into contact with the mercury into a plastic bag and seal, zipper-lock bags work best - if you use non-zipper-lock bags, duct tape the opening shut.
- If your town has a Household Hazardous Waste Collection facility or annual event, take the mercury waste to it. If there is not a mercury waste collection facility in your community, please call DEQ for disposal.

Disposal Facilities

If you live in the metropolitan areas of Oklahoma you may have more options for recycling mercury than rural communities.

Oklahoma City

- Oklahoma City has a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility located at SW 15th and Portland Avenue, which will accept household mercury and mercury containing devices. Visit their Web site at www.okc.gov/services/hh_waste/index.html.

Tulsa

- The Metropolitan Environmental Trust in Tulsa sponsors a mercury thermometer exchange and Household Pollutant Collection Events, visit their Web site at www.metrecycle.com/merc_web/mercury_disposal.htm.

- To transport liquid mercury, make sure it is in a sealed container. Place the container in a zipper-lock bag.
- Transport container in back of pickup truck or trunk of car.
- Kitty litter placed inside the zipper-lock bag will help stabilize the container for transport
- If you have a large amount of mercury, call DEQ for assistance in transporting the material.



Midwest City

- Midwest City and communities belonging to the Central Oklahoma Metropolitan Environmental Association (COMECA) can dispose of their mercury at the Midwest City Household Hazardous Waste Permanent Facility, by appointment only. For more information, visit their Web site at www.midwestcityok.org/stormwaterhhw.htm.

Rural Oklahoma

- If you live in a small town or rural area, check with your community/county to see if they sponsor annual Household Hazardous Waste Collections. If so, ask if they will accept mercury. If not, contact DEQ for disposal.

In Oklahoma, it is legal to throw household hazardous waste in the trash, but it is not the environmentally friendly thing to do. Mercury is a serious environmental threat and DEQ encourages you to be environmentally responsible and recycle the mercury. If you cannot find a local household hazardous waste collection event, and especially if

you have a large amount of "loose" mercury stored in a jar, please call DEQ at 405-702-5100 and we will assist in getting the mercury recycled.

One pound, approximately two tablespoons, of spilled mercury should be reported to the National Response Center at (800) 424-8802.



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