

Mercury Spill Information and Response Guidance

Background Information

Mercury can be found in a variety of non-laboratory items such as fluorescent light bulbs, thermometers, older pressure gauges, plumbing traps and vacuum pumps. When mercury is spilled, it forms beads or droplets that can accumulate in the tiniest places. These droplets can emit vapors into the air that are unseen and odorless. Breathing mercury vapors can be very dangerous, depending on the amount inhaled and the length of exposure to the contaminated air.

Amount of elemental mercury in various items:

- Fluorescent light bulbs have 10 to 40mg of mercury
- Thermometers have 50mg to 3g of mercury
- Older Pressure Gauges have 3 to 10g of mercury
- Plumbing Traps can have 100g to several pounds of mercury

DON'TS

- Never pour mercury down the drain
- Never burn mercury
- Never put mercury in the trash
- Never allow people whose shoes or clothing may be contaminated with mercury to walk around the room or into a hallway.
- Never use an ordinary vacuum or a shop vacuum to clean up mercury

DO'S

- Call REM at 40121 or Purdue Police at 48221(911) to report a mercury spill.
- Keep everyone away from the area of spill. Before leaving the area check for mercury on clothing and bottom of shoes. If mercury is visible on any articles of clothing or shoes, remove and keep those articles in the area.
- Keep the incident area under 70 degrees F to minimize the release of mercury vapors.
- Keep air flowing in the area. Close the inside doors of the area. If weather allows, open any exterior windows. Use fans in the area that pull inside air outside.
- If you or any other people have come in contact with the mercury, stay in the area so you do not spread the contamination.
- Contain the spill. Make sure the mercury does not move to drains, cracks, or crevices. If you leave the incident area, make sure your clothes and shoes are not contaminated with mercury.