



FACT SHEET

Mercury Devices & Liquid Mercury

Hazards

- Thermostats and switches contain several grams of mercury in fragile glass bulbs or ampoules. These ampoules (as well as mercury containing thermometers) may break, releasing droplets of toxic mercury.
- Mercury is toxic to the human nervous system, as well as fish and animals. Mercury can enter the body either through skin absorption or through inhalation of mercury vapors. At room temperature, small beads of mercury will vaporize.

Handling Small Spills

- See the MassDEP fact sheet: [Cleaning Up Spills of Elemental \(Liquid\) Mercury](#)
- Seal off room from other indoor spaces, ventilate to the outside.
- Take off jewelry and put on rubber gloves. Pick up mercury with an eyedropper or scoop up with stiff paper or card stock, being careful to not touch with skin or clothing. Place mercury in a sealed glass or plastic container and label MERCURY.
- Do not vacuum because it breaks up and heats droplets, facilitating vaporization. Once a vacuum cleaner has been used for a mercury spill it will continue to release mercury into the air and it is therefore safest to discard the contaminated machine rather than continue to use it.
- Use duct or packing tape to clean up remaining small particles. Place contaminated tape into a sealed plastic or glass container and label MERCURY
- Do not wash mercury into drains.
- Do not wash mercury contaminated clothing or items in washing machine.

Handling Large Spills (over 1 pound or 2 tablespoons)

- Immediately evacuate everyone from the room and close the doors. Turn off central heating or cooling system.
- Call MassDEP emergency response staff at 888-304-1133 (24 hours) to report the spill. Notify local health department and ask if they have a mercury spill kit. MassDEP staff will advise you on further actions.
- Call [New England Disposal Technologies, Inc.](#), a licensed Emergency Spill Response Contractor - 800-698-1865.

Management Options

- Take containerized metallic mercury, mercury containing devices and mercury contaminated clothing to a Household Hazardous Products Collection Center.
- Some hospitals will take small amounts of mercury from residents as a community service. Call your local hospital environmental services department to see if they will accept it.

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

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