

Mercury

When liquid mercury (also known as elemental mercury) is spilled, it forms droplets that can collect in the tiniest spaces and then it continues to emit vapors for years to come. Mercury vapor in the air is odorless, colorless and very toxic. Most mercury exposures occur by breathing vapors or by eating food or drinking water contaminated with mercury.

Health problems caused by mercury depend mostly on how long you have been exposed to it, since it accumulates in the body throughout your lifetime. All mercury spills, especially those of elemental mercury, should be treated seriously.

If you spill mercury anywhere:

The general public can clean up small mercury spills no greater than the amount contained in a thermometer from flat surfaces.

If you estimate your mercury spill to be greater than the amount in a thermometer, isolate the contaminated area and call your local health department or emergency management agency.

To clean up a small spill put on rubber or latex gloves. Locate visible mercury beads. Use cardboard to gather mercury beads. Use an eyedropper to collect the mercury beads. Slowly and carefully squeeze mercury onto a damp paper towel. Place the paper towel in a zip lock bag and secure. Make sure to label the bag.

After you remove larger beads, put shaving cream on top of a small paint brush and gently "dot" the affected area to pick up smaller hard-to-see beads. Place all materials in a trash bag and contact your local health department, or emergency management agency to find out where you should drop off the contaminated items.

What never to do with a mercury spill

- **NEVER** use a vacuum cleaner to clean up mercury. The vacuum will put mercury into the air and increase exposure. The vacuum appliance will be contaminated and have to be thrown away.
- **NEVER** use a broom to clean up mercury. It will break the mercury into smaller droplets and spread them.
- **NEVER** pour mercury down the drain. It may cause future problems during plumbing repairs. If discharged, it can cause pollution of the septic tank or sewage treatment plant.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Poison Control Center:

1-800-222-222

Ohio EPA Spills Hotline:

800-282-9378

National Response Center:

800-424-8802

Lorain County

Emergency Management:

440-329-5117

Lorain County Health District:

440-284-5785

Elyria City Health Department:

440-323-7595

Lorain City Health Department:

440-204-2300

LORAIN COUNTY

Solid Waste Management District

A Department of the Lorain County Commissioners

Join us in

"Working together to Help Keep Lorain County Clean & Green"

1-800-449-5463

www.loraincounty.us/solidwaste

Did You Know?

- **Short term exposure** to mercury may cause nausea, diarrhea, skin rashes, and/or eye irritation, and can increase your blood pressure or heart rate.
- **Long term exposure** can permanently damage the central nervous system, kidneys and developing fetuses.
- Spilled mercury divides into extremely small and sometimes microscopic beads
- Mercury is a metal, but near room temperature evaporates into its gaseous state
- Mercury vapor is colorless, odorless and tasteless
- One gallon of mercury weighs 104 pounds
- 1 teaspoon of mercury takes 20 years to evaporate

What is *methylmercury*?

Mercury can occur naturally in the environment and it can also be released into the air through industrial pollution.

As mercury falls from the air, it accumulates in streams and oceans and turns into methylmercury in the water. Fish feeding in these waters absorb the methylmercury and the levels continue to build up within them. This type of mercury can be especially dangerous to young children and pregnant women if fish containing high levels of mercury is consumed too frequently.

Fish to avoid eating because they contain high levels of mercury are: Shark, Swordfish, King Mackerel, Tilefish.

To check on the fish consumption mercury advisory listings for the State of Ohio, please check out the Ohio EPA website at:

www.epa.state.oh.us/

Where to take elemental mercury or devices containing mercury:

Lorain County Collection Center located at:
540 South Abbe Road, Elyria, Oh

Monday & Wednesday 12:00—6:00pm
Saturday 9:00—6:00pm