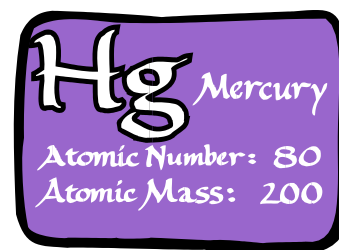


Spotlight On Safety

www.ehs.ucr.edu

Mercury Spill Control

Mercury is a silver liquid metal that vaporizes at temperatures as low as 10° F. The colorless and odorless mercury vapor may cause toxic effects when inhaled. Most health effects result from constant exposure with symptoms of inflammation of gums/ mouth, excessive salivation or metallic taste, and tremors, particularly of the hands. The symptoms of acute exposure are bronchitis, cough, chest pain, and irritability. Mercury-containing devices are commonly used in laboratories and shops to measure temperature, pressure, liquid density, and humidity.



Types of Mercury Spills

Mercury spills from broken thermometers are the most common type of hazardous material clean up on campus. Broken thermometers are also the number one source of potential mercury discharges to the sanitary sewer system. Spilled elemental mercury may hide under benches, continuously exposing staff and students to vapors. Mercury-containing devices may also be broken inside a laboratory fume hood, thereby releasing vapors into the air.

Spill Cleanup

Small spills such as a broken thermometer must be cleaned immediately; a lab coat, disposable gloves, and shoe covers must be worn to prevent skin absorption or contamination of clothing. If you have questions regarding how to clean up the spill, contact EHS at 951-827-5528.

In the event of a large spill of elemental mercury, isolate the area and contact EHS. EHS will provide experienced staff and supplies to clean up the spill safely. Here are some precautionary steps to take while waiting for EHS:

1. Turn off equipment if the mercury spill occurred in a hot water bath or other heated object.
2. Prevent mercury from entering sink or floor drains.
3. Avoid mercury exposure by keeping away from the spill and closing doors.
4. Prevent anyone from walking through an area containing spilled mercury

Mercury waste and materials used in spill cleanup will be placed in a sealed bottle or in a bag and labeled for disposal as hazardous waste. The laboratory must submit a waste pickup form through WASTE.

Thermometer Exchange Program

You can exchange mercury thermometers with spirit-filled thermometers for **FREE**. More information can be found on the EHS Website: <https://ehs.ucr.edu/laboratory/mercury>.