Minor Mercury Spill Procedures

Follow the procedures below when cleaning up a small amount of mercury such as from a broken thermometer.

1. Lower the temperature in the area, whenever possible. Mercury is a liquid at room temperature but at higher temperature can easily become a vapor which may then be inhaled.
2. Open the windows, if they are operable. Allow any mercury vapors to escape outside.
3. Protect yourself. Make sure you are dressed in clothing which completely covers your arms and legs. Put on gloves, shoe covers, and safety glasses. Remove all metal jewelry before attempting to clean up mercury. Mercury will bond to metal jewelry.
4. Contain the spill. Protect environmental receptors such as sinks or floor drains.

Spills on Hard, Smooth Surfaces

- Use two pieces of stiff cardboard to push debris and beads of mercury together and then scoop them up. Place the collected material and the pieces of cardboard in a plastic or glass waste container.
- Pick up pieces of broken glass with tweezers and place in the waste container.
- Use the eyedropper to suck up small beads of mercury that cannot be gathered using the cardboard. If you need to expel the eyedropper, gently do so onto a wet paper towel placed inside the waste container. Discard the eyedropper in the waste container when finished. Alternatively, you can use the duct tape to pick up very small droplets of mercury only. Discard the tape in the waste container.
- Turn on the flashlight and shine it over the spill area. Light will reflect off broken glass and bead of mercury. This will help in locating any remaining spilled materials.
Spills on Carpets, Rugs, or Fabric

- If the spill is on an area rug, roll the area rug up. Wrap the rug in two layers of plastic sheeting and proceed to the disposal section of this document.
- If the spill is on wall-to-wall carpeting, do not attempt to cut out the affected area yourself. Cutting and tugging actions can disperse additional mercury into the indoor environment. Isolate the affected room and contact OEHS for assistance.
- If the spill is on upholstery, contact OEHS for disposal.

Mercury Spilled in Water

- If the liquid mercury fell into a sink full of water, recover the mercury beads using an eyedropper.
- Expel the eyedropper into a sealable container.
- Once complete, the remaining water can be flushed to the sewer as mercury is not soluble in water.
- Prepare waste material for disposal as outlined below.

Mercury Spilled Down the Drain

If the liquid mercury went down a sink drain, contact OEHS immediately for assistance.

7. Sprinkle the Hg Absorb™ powder over the spill site. This material will bind any remaining mercury from the spill. Hg Absorb™ powder may be sprinkled on wall-to-wall carpeting or upholstery in anticipation of disposal to prevent further mercury vapor generation. Collect the powder with a moist paper towel.

8. Lightly mist the area with water to prevent dust generation during cleanup.
9. Collect all materials used in the spill cleanup in a plastic or glass waste container. Seal the container and label with a UNH hazardous waste label. Store the waste container in a secondary waste container.

10. Wash your hands when finished.

11. Call the Office of Environmental Health and Safety to schedule a pickup, 862-4041.

12. Contact OEHS with any questions or concerns about the spill.
Major Mercury Spill Procedures

Follow the procedures below for a large spill of mercury such as from a broken manometer, large barometer, or other large quantity of mercury. If you do not have enough mercury absorbent to clean up a spill, follow the procedures below.

1. Evacuate the immediate area, closing the door behind you.
2. Notify your supervisor and call OEHS at 2-4041.