

Mercury Spill Cleanup Instructions

Follow these instructions for small, new spills to minimize the health hazard. Call DEQ for additional instructions at (405) 702-5100. After normal working hours and on weekends call the DEQ hotline at (800) 522-0206.

The main danger from spilled mercury is inhalation of mercury vapors. The vapors are invisible and odorless. Mercury vaporizes at room temperature and will easily migrate throughout a home. Small spills of mercury can be cleaned yourself. Please follow the Dos and Don'ts below. If more than the amount of mercury in a thermometer, thermostat, or compact fluorescent lightbulb is spilled, leave the house and immediately seek assistance.

Do

- Turn off central heating and cooling system.
- Children, pregnant women, and pets should leave the area.
- Open the windows and doors for ventilation. Close off the room from the rest of the house or building, if possible, where the spill is located.
- Close the door to the room to prevent mercury vapors from migrating to other parts of the house or building.
- Use flashlight to find mercury beads.
- If spilled on hard surface, use a piece of stiff paper or cardboard to push the beads together into a larger bead. Push the large bead onto another piece of paper being careful not to drop it and place it into a container that has a tight-fitting lid – a glass jar or plastic container.
- Place the container, paper or other items that came in contact with the mercury into a zipper-lock plastic bag. For added protection, double bag the contents.
- Other options: medicine droppers, turkey basters, electrical or duct tape, and sulfur powder. Sulfur binds to the mercury and a color change from yellow to brown occurs. Sulfur may be obtained from lawn and garden centers. Note that sometimes the suction created by the medicine dropper and turkey baster is not strong enough to hold the mercury, so hold them low and parallel to the floor during use.
- If spilled over drain, remove the J- or S-traps. Put a sheet of plastic or a plastic tray under the work area to catch any mercury that might fall.
- If the spill is on carpet, cut out and remove any contaminated carpet and padding. Immediately place the contaminated piece into a trash bag. Keep the bag upright, so mercury cannot run out of the opening. Tape the opening shut.
- Move contaminated furniture, clothing, and other porous materials that came in contact with the mercury outside to air out.
- Check clothing and the soles of shoes for visible mercury, remove any droplets, and place these items outside to air out.



Don't

- Do not vacuum the area.
- Do not use mops, brooms or brushes.
- Do not use household cleaning agents that contain chlorine or ammonia.
- Do not pour down the drain.
- Never wash mercury-contaminated items in a washing machine.
- Do not attempt to clean up a large spill of mercury without professional assistance.
- Do not attempt to clean up old spills because the mercury will have had time to permeate the area and create a health hazard. Call DEQ for assistance.
- Do not keep or reuse items used to clean up the spill.

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Disposal

- Place the mercury and all items that came into contact with the mercury into a plastic bag and seal. Zipper-lock bags work best. For non-zipper-lock bags, duct tape the opening shut.
- In Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and Midwest City, take the waste to the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility. For other areas, please call DEQ for assistance with other disposal options.
- To transport liquid mercury, make sure it is in a sealed container. Place the container in a zipper-lock bag.
- Transport the container in the back of a pickup truck or trunk of a car.
- Kitty litter placed inside the zipper-lock bag will help stabilize the container for transport.
- For large amounts of mercury, call DEQ for assistance in transporting the material.

Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City has a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility located at SW 15th and Portland Avenue, which will accept household mercury and mercury containing devices. Visit their website at <https://tinyurl.com/uwnx6n6m>.

Tulsa

The City of Tulsa operates a household pollutant facility at 4502 South Galveston. Call **(918) 591-4325** to make an appointment. More information can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/5cfev7np>.

Midwest City

Residents of Midwest City and communities belonging to the Central Oklahoma Metropolitan Environmental Association (COMECA) can dispose of their mercury at the Midwest City Household Hazardous Waste Permanent Facility, by appointment only. For more information, visit their website at <https://tinyurl.com/3229n2u8>.

All Other Communities and Rural Oklahoma

Contact DEQ at **(405) 702-5100**. After normal working hours and on weekends, call the DEQ hotline at **(800) 522-0206**. DEQ will also be happy to answer any questions regarding mercury.

If you or someone you know has been exposed to mercury, please call Oklahoma Poison Control at **(800) 222-1222**.

Mercury releases greater than one pound, approximately two tablespoons, should be reported to the National Response Center at **(800) 424-8802**.