

Guidelines on Handling Mercury
Receipt, Package, Transport & Storage
Mercury Program
Land Protection Division
Oklahoma DEQ

1.0 Introduction

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Land Protection Division (LPD) has a mercury program, which provides a service to citizens of Oklahoma to collect, store, and recycle household mercury and mercury containing items. Mercury-containing devices in households can include thermometers, thermostats, barometers, switches, irons, pressure-sensing devices, and sphygmomanometers (blood pressure measuring device). Also, some people keep or find liquid (elemental) mercury in bottles and other containers.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance to DEQ building security and maintenance personnel, and DEQ employees on what procedures to take when packaging, transporting, and storing mercury and mercury containing debris. The Environmental Complaints & Local Services (ECLS) and LPD will be the primary responsible staff implementing these guidelines; others may be designated as needed. DEQ building security and maintenance and operations personnel are included in the event that citizens deliver mercury to the building.

If someone comes to the DEQ to “drop off” mercury, Security or maintenance and operations personnel should ask them to wait while they call someone to assist them. The main contact for this project is **Jon Reid (ext. 5121)**. Notify him first. If he is out of the office, Security can call the **5th floor Reception Desk (ext. 5100)**, and they will notify an alternate contact to meet the person and collect the mercury. **The mercury should not be handled by inexperienced persons.**

The Mercury Program does not cover fluorescent bulbs (tubes nor compact fluorescent). The DEQ will not handle fluorescent bulbs in the Mercury Program. Individuals are allowed to dispose fluorescent bulbs in the trash. If an individual has the desire to recycle their used fluorescent bulbs, there are recyclers that specifically recycle fluorescent bulbs and can provide boxes for you to mail the fluorescent bulbs to them. Lowe’s and Home Depot specifically recycle the compact fluorescent bulbs. Some cities have household hazardous waste collection facilities that will collect fluorescent bulbs.

2.0 Packaging Materials for Mercury and Mercury Containing Debris

Before collecting mercury, below is a list of suggested equipment and supplies for packaging mercury and mercury containing debris:

- Zip-lock-type bags
- Rigid container with lids such as an old paint can or coffee can
- Wide-mouth plastic 5-gallon container (buckets or pails) with screw-on lid
- Kitty litter
- Plastic trash bags (2 to 6 mm thick)
- 55-Gallon or over-pack drums

3.0 Packaging & Transporting Mercury Waste

- When the mercury containing items are received from a residence, ensure the lid on the container is secure. If the lid is not secure, use duct tape to seal the lid to the container. Recommended containers for individuals to package mercury would be a rigid container such as an old paint can or coffee can. For example, if a resident discovers a glass jar with mercury, it should be placed inside an old paint can or coffee can.
- After the secured container is in DEQ possession, set the container inside a zip-lock bag or a larger container with a tight fitting lid (preferably a 5-gallon bucket). Each ECLS office should have a 5-gallon bucket with a screw-on lid to store mercury waste. Jon Reid will provide a bucket for each ECLS office.
- Never transport mercury without secondary containment (i.e. zip-lock bag and coffee can or 5-gallon bucket).
- If the mercury waste is too large to fit in a 5-gallon bucket, place the item in a 55-gallon or over-pack drum. Contact Jon Reid at 405-702-5121 if a drum is needed.
- If needed, place kitty litter or Hg absorbent inside the 5-gallon bucket around the mercury containing items to protect from breakage or sudden shocks
- Clearly label storage container as “Mercury - DO NOT OPEN.”
- Transport containers in the back of a pick-up truck or in a car trunk. If you must transport in the passenger compartment, make sure there is adequate ventilation.
- Secure the 5-gallon bucket of mercury waste so that it does not tip over. This will minimize shifting or sliding during sudden stops or turns.
- You do not need to put DOT labels or placards on your vehicle. You are not transporting “in commerce,” which triggers DOT regulations. Additionally, this is household hazardous waste, which is exempt from hazardous waste regulations.

4.0 Storage of Mercury Waste

Mercury should be stored in a cool, dry, well-ventilated area in tightly sealed containers protected from exposure to weather and physical damage. The DEQ has a storage area at the main office for mercury waste located in the Acid Storage Room on the first floor. Mercury waste items are located in the northwest corner of the room separate from laboratory waste, which is also stored inside the room.

Please contact Jon Reid at 405-702-5121 or Jonathan.Reid@deq.ok.gov when mercury waste will be delivered at the DEQ main building. Our alternate contact is Steven Gunnels who can be reached at 405-702-5173 or Steven.Gunnels@deq.ok.gov.

5.0 Disposal of Mercury Waste

Disposal of mercury waste at the DEQ main office will occur once or twice a year depending on the quantity of waste stored. A recycler will be contacted by the DEQ when there is a sufficient amount of mercury waste to be disposed. Jon Reid is responsible in arranging for disposal and will keep track of the estimated weight of the stored mercury waste.