

Mercury Disposal

When products containing mercury are placed in the trash or disposed down a drain, the mercury does not disappear. The mercury finds its way into the environment through waste incinerators, landfills, and wastewater treatment facilities.

To properly dispose of items containing mercury around the home, place the item in a sealable, plastic container and label it "Mercury for Disposal". Take the container to a local disposal or recycling site.

Spilled Mercury Clean Up

Mercury evaporates slowly. Therefore, if spilled and not properly cleaned, mercury evaporation will cause continuous contamination of the air you breathe.

Even tiny mercury spills are difficult to clean up. *NEVER* use a vacuum cleaner or shop-vac to clean up a mercury spill! Take the following steps to clean up a mercury spill:

- Isolate and contain the spill
- Keep pets and children away
- Ventilate the area
- Remove jewelry and watches so the mercury does not combine with the precious metal
- Use rubber gloves and safety glasses
- Use pieces of rigid paper to scoop all the tiny beads into a sealable, plastic container
- Wipe area with a damp sponge
- Properly dispose of all cleanup material (paper, gloves, sponges) as well as any contaminated rug or portion of carpet by placing everything in marked plastic containers and taking them to a local mercury recycling site

Where Can You Find Assistance?

Mercury Thermometer Exchange:

- Macomb County Health Department
43525 Elizabeth Road, Mt. Clemens, MI
586.469.5467
- VerKuilen Building - WIC Program
21885 Dunham Road, Clinton Township, MI
586.469.5471

Hazardous Waste Disposal:

- Macomb County Health Department
Environmental Health Services Division
586.469.5467

Poison Control:

In case of emergency, call the Poison Control Center
24 hours a day - (800) 222.1222

Mercury Alternatives and Additional Information:

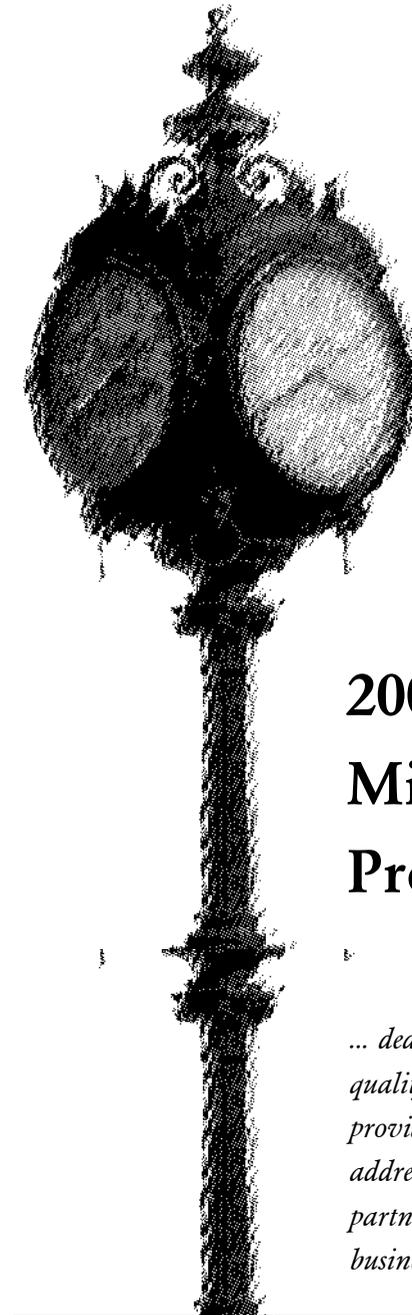
- Michigan Department of Community Health
(800) MI-TOXIC
- www.deq.state.mi.us/ead/p2sect/mercury



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City of RICHMOND...



2003 Mercury Minimization Program

... dedicated to promoting a high quality of life for its residents by providing municipal services and addressing community issues in partnership with its citizens, businesses, and neighbors.

Why This Brochure Is Important

The City of Richmond has been implementing a mercury minimization program for the past five years, as required by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). The goal of the program is to minimize the amount of mercury entering the wastewater treatment plant and ultimately, the environment. As part of this effort, the City is distributing this brochure to inform you of possible sources of mercury within your house, and how to properly dispose of items containing mercury. We hope that you will help in our efforts to minimize contamination of the environment.

What is Mercury?

Mercury is an element found naturally in the environment, occurring in several forms:

- At room temperature, mercury is the only metal that is liquid. It is shiny, silver-gray in color, and odorless.
- When heated, mercury becomes volatile and the liquid changes into a colorless, odorless gas.
- When combined with other metals such as tin, copper, gold, or silver, mercury alloys are formed.

Mercury and the Environment

Mercury in the air mixes with rain and snow and falls into lakes and waterways. It also reaches the environment through improper disposal of products containing mercury. When mercury is deposited in lakes or waterways, bacteria convert it to methyl mercury, which contaminates the food chain and builds up in the tissue of fish, wildlife, and humans who eat the fish. Because of high mercury concentrations in fish, Michigan has been under a statewide mercury fish consumption advisory for all 11,000 inland lakes since 1988.



About one gram of mercury enters a 20-acre lake each year. One gram of mercury is only a small drop; a teaspoonful of mercury weighs about 70 grams. By comparison, a typical mercury thermometer contains about 0.5 grams of mercury.

Problems Caused by Mercury

Mercury is a nerve toxin that may impair the way we see, hear, walk, and talk. Breathing mercury vapor affects the human brain, spinal cord, eyes, and kidneys. It may cause:

- mood changes
- inability to concentrate

- memory loss
- shaking, tingling, or loss of feeling in the hand, tongue, or eyelid
- discoloration of the cornea and lens of the eye
- vision disturbances
- kidney disease

Swallowing mercury compounds may cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

If a *pregnant woman* is exposed to mercury, her *unborn child* may experience damage to vision, hearing, taste, smell, memory, and mental abilities. *Small children* are more susceptible than adults to mercury poisoning.

Everyday Sources of Mercury and Alternative Products

The following is a list of mercury sources that may be present in your home and the possible alternatives

Items Containing Mercury

Alternative

- Thermometers with silver colored liquid inside Alcohol thermometers (red bulb) or digital thermometers
- Non-electronic thermostats..... Electronic models
- Pilot light sensors in some gas appliances such as When making new purchases, look for hot surface ignition ovens, clothes dryers, water heaters, furnaces, and space heaters systems for devices or products having electrical connections
- Vintage toys - drawing screens and mercury maze games..... Toys which are mercury-free
- Antiseptic products containing thimerosal or merbromin Mercury-free sprays or solutions such as nasal sprays or contact lens solutions (check label)
- Pre-1997 tennis shoes with light-up soles (check label)..... Mercury-free shoes (check label)
- Pre-1990 Latex Paint..... Latex Paint produced after 1990 is mercury-free
- Button-type Batteries (hearing aid batteries) Lithium, zinc air, or alkaline batteries

For more alternatives, visit the MDEQ web site at www.deq.state.mi.us/ead/p2sect/mercury