



What to Do if a Mercury Thermometer Breaks

NOTE: These instructions also apply to spills from other sources, if the amount spilled is less than or similar to the amount in a thermometer.

- Have everyone else leave the area; don't let anyone walk through the mercury on their way out. Make sure all pets are removed from the area. Open all windows and doors to the outside; shut all doors to other parts of the house.
- DO NOT allow children to help you clean up the spill.
- Mercury (Hg) can be cleaned up easily from the following surfaces: wood, linoleum, tile and any similarly smooth surfaces.
- If a spill occurs on carpet, curtains, upholstery or other absorbent surfaces, these contaminated items should be thrown away in accordance with the disposal means outlined below. Only cut and remove the affected portion of the contaminated carpet for disposal.
- Do not touch mercury with your bare hands.

Items needed to clean up a small mercury spill

1. 4-5 ziplock-type bags
2. trash bags (2 to 6 mm thick)
3. rubber, nitrile or latex gloves
4. paper towels
5. cardboard or squeegee
6. eyedropper
7. duct tape, or shaving cream and small paint brush
8. flashlight
9. commercial clean-up kit (optional)

Cleanup Instructions

1. Put on rubber, nitrile or latex gloves.
2. Lower room temperature.
3. Turn off ventilation to keep vapors out of other rooms.
4. If there are any broken pieces of glass or sharp objects, pick them up with care. Place all broken objects on a paper towel. Fold the paper towel and place in a zip lock bag. Secure the bag and label it as directed by your local health department.
5. Locate visible mercury beads. Use a squeegee or cardboard to gather mercury beads. Use slow sweeping motions to keep mercury from becoming uncontrollable. Take a flashlight, hold it at a low angle close to the floor in a darkened room and look for additional glistening beads of mercury that may be sticking to

the surface or in small cracked areas of the surface. Note: Mercury can move surprising distances on hard-flat surfaces, so be sure to inspect the entire room when "searching."

6. Use the eyedropper to collect or draw up the mercury beads. Slowly and carefully squeeze mercury onto a damp paper towel. Place the paper towel in a zip lock bag and secure. Make sure to clearly label the bag with "Mercury – Hg".
7. After you remove larger beads, put shaving cream on top of small paint brush and gently "dot" the affected area to pick up smaller hard-to-see beads. Alternatively, use duct tape to collect smaller hard-to-see beads. Place the paint brush or duct tape in a zip lock bag and secure. Again, label the bag with "Mercury – Hg".
8. OPTIONAL STEP: A commercially available Hg spill kit to absorb the beads that are too small to see. One option is a sulfur powder which: (1) makes the mercury easier to see since there may be a color change from yellow to brown and (2) binds the mercury so that it can be easily removed and suppresses the vapor of any missing mercury. Where to get commercialized sulfur? It may be supplied as mercury vapor absorbent in mercury spill kits, which can be purchased from laboratory, chemical supply and hazardous materials response supply manufacturers. Alternatively, the Snohomish Health District has a granular, Hg-spill powder available for clean up. **Note:** It is important to follow the directions for use with any clean-up kit or powder. Users should read and understand the product information before use.
9. You may also want to request the services of a contractor who has monitoring equipment to screen for mercury vapors. Consult your local environmental or health agency to inquire about contractors in your area. Place all materials used with the clean up, including gloves, in a trash bag. Place all mercury beads and objects into the trash bag. Secure trash bag and label it as directed by the Snohomish Health District.
10. Contact the Snohomish Health District for proper disposal in accordance with local, state and federal laws. In Snohomish County, properly collected, bagged and labeled mercury and mercury contaminated clean up materials can be disposed of at the Household Hazardous Waste facility in Everett at 3434 McDougall Avenue (425.388.6050 or www.snoco.org, then search "Haz Waste Drop Off").
11. Remember to keep the area well ventilated to the outside (i.e., windows open and fans in exterior windows running) for at least 24 hours after your successful cleanup. Continue to keep pets and children out of cleanup area. If sickness occurs, seek medical attention immediately.
12. Go to <http://www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/> to View information on health effects related to exposures to vapors from metallic mercury. For additional information on health effects, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) provides a Mercury Fact Sheet that also presents information on health effects related to exposures to vapors from metallic mercury at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts46.html>.

Recommendation: If there are young children or pregnant women in the house, you may wish to advise your physician of the release.