

What is mercury?

Mercury is a naturally occurring metal. It is liquid at room temperature, binds easily with other metals and conducts electricity well. Because of these properties, mercury has been used in many household, medical and industrial products.

Why is mercury a concern?

When mercury enters our waterways, it changes, (through natural chemical process) to methyl mercury, which is more toxic. Methyl mercury in the food chain builds up in the tissue of fish and animals. In humans, mercury is a neurotoxin. This means it slows fetal and child development and impairs brain function along with several other devastating affects.

Mercury is toxic in small amounts. Because mercury builds up in the food chain, even small amounts of mercury in water can make fish unsafe to eat and cause reproductive problems for wildlife. Mercury volatilizes at room temperature so even a small mercury spill indoors can make the air unsafe to breathe.



New York State Law Summary

On July 12, 2004 a new law banned the sale of mercury-added novelty products and mercury-ferver thermometers in New York State and requires new labeling and proper disposal or recycling of mercury-added consumer products. Disposal of mercury-added products is not allowed in the normal trash but must be managed by separate delivery to a household hazardous waste collection program. See the reverse side for more information on the Broome County Household Hazardous Waste Program. For more details on NYS Mercury laws go to www.gobroomecounty.com or visit the Department of Environmental Conservation website at www.dec.state.ny.us

Where is mercury in my home?

Most commonly mercury is found in the following products:

- Thermometers (fever, candy, fry, indoor/outdoor, oven)
- Thermostats (nonelectronic)
- Older paints (before 1990)
- Fluorescent lights
- Pilot light sensors in gas stoves, water heaters and dryers
- Barometers
- Some toys
- Clothes irons with automatic or tilt shutoff
- Blood pressure cuffs
- Switches and relays in some chest freezers, sump and bilge pumps and electric space heaters
- Topical disinfectants with mercurochrome or tincture of merthiolate
- Antibacterial products with thimerosal or merbromin
- Dental fillings
- Grandfather clock weights
- Antique mirrors

Please Note: This is not a complete list!

What do I do if I break something that contains mercury?

Never use a vacuum to clean up a mercury spill. First, open windows to ventilate the room. If mercury was spilled on a smooth surface, use two pieces of stiff paper to scoop all the beads of mercury and place in a sealable plastic container. If needed or if spilled on carpet, use an eyedropper to pick up beads of mercury. Remaining beads of mercury can be picked up using sticky tape. Put any contaminated portion of carpet and all cleanup materials in a plastic container. All materials should be taken to the household hazardous waste facility.

Please Note: For more descriptive directions to clean up a small mercury spill please go to the County website at www.gobroomecounty.com or visit the Department of Environmental Conservation website at www.dec.state.ny.us

Mercury in the Home



The Broome County
Hazardous Waste Facility is located at:

Broome County Landfill
286 Knapp Rd., Binghamton, NY

For collection dates and times call
778-2250 or visit
www.gobroomecounty.com.



Barbara J. Fiala
Broome County Executive

Broome County
Division of Solid Waste Management
www.gobroomecounty.com

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