

Mercury Disposal and Cleanup Procedures

Summary/Purpose: The Mercury Disposal and Cleanup Policy details the minimum requirements and procedures to properly clean up, package and dispose of Mercury.

Mercury Disposal and Cleanup Procedures

Although most mercury containing compounds are regulated as a hazardous waste, mercury metal is collected for recycling by Laboratory Services personnel.

Whenever possible, Mercury metal should not be mixed with other chemicals (except water).

Collect Mercury in clean containers with tight fitting lids. Always use a secondary container, such as a pan or bucket. Label the container "used Mercury" and process a [Request for Disposal](#) as you would for any hazardous material.

Mercury Spills and Broken Thermometers;

The most common accident involving Hazardous Materials on the campus involves a broken thermometer or a spill of a few drops of Mercury.

Always respond promptly to a spill or accident involving hazardous materials.

If you have been properly trained by your supervisor, you may clean up a small chemical spill with the assistance of other personnel in your area.

- A small spill is defined as a spill where:
 - There is little threat to human health personnel property or to the environment, **and;**
 - There are no injuries beyond what simple first aid can manage, **and;**
 - The characteristics and the hazards of the material are known, **and;**
 - You have both the supplies and the knowledge necessary to clean up the materials.

If your spill does not fit all of the specifications above, you have a **Large Spill**.

Report injuries to the University Police at (915)-4911 **immediately**.

Contact Laboratory Services at (915)-5433.

Tend to injured personnel if you can do so without causing harm to yourself.

Leave the area of the spill.

The University of Mississippi

Short term exposure to a small amount of mercury while cleaning up a thermometer spill in a large room will not pose a severe health risk. If you feel that you are unable to clean up the spill, consult with someone in your area or contact Laboratory Services at (915) 5433 for advice.

- Always wear eye protection and appropriate gloves during a cleanup;
- Remove all uncontaminated glassware and other materials out of the way. Materials that are not contaminated should not be packaged as hazardous waste;
- Collect any contaminated glass in a puncture resistant, separately labelled, container for disposal;
- Never use a vacuum cleaner to collect mercury. This will only disperse the mercury into the air;
- Never use the lab vacuum system (without a suitable trap) to collect mercury - you can contaminate the entire vacuum system;
- Use commercial mercury spill kits, and follow manufacturer's instructions, if available;
- Droplets can be moved together with a piece of paper, cardboard or any similar material. Pool the material to facilitate the collection of material. Using a disposable syringe or a disposable pipette, collect the material into a container. Duct tape or moist paper towels can also be used to collect small droplets;
- Package the mercury and contact Laboratory Services as recommended above.