

WHAT IS MERCURY?

MERCURY is a highly toxic element that can cause severe health problems. The young are especially vulnerable to excessive exposure to mercury as it can damage a developing brain, hampering the way young children think and learn. At any age, it can harm the heart, kidneys, lungs and immune system. When products containing mercury are disposed of improperly, the mercury can make its way into our streams, lakes, and rivers, poisoning fish and harming other wildlife.



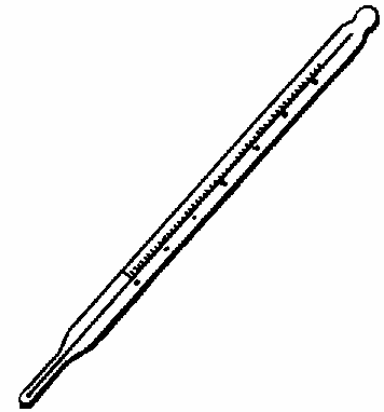
The common place to find **MERCURY** is in your home thermostat. The average mercury thermostat contains 1/20th of a teaspoon of mercury. That may not seem like much, but it only takes 1/70 of a teaspoon to contaminate a 25-acre lake to the point that fish from the lake are unsafe to eat. This is why the proper disposal of mercury as a hazardous household waste is so important.



33 W 4th St
Fremont, NE 68025
(402) 727-5396

www.threeriverspublichealth.org

MERCURY SAFETY



PROTECTING YOURSELF IN YOUR HOME



COMMON ITEMS THAT MAY CONTAIN MERCURY

Thermostats—These are the single largest source of mercury in average homes. Safe alternatives include digital systems which can be purchased at hardware stores.

Thermometers—Mercury is used in many household thermometers. Alternatives are digital or red alcohol thermometers found at local drug stores.

Fluorescent Lighting—Fluorescent and neon lighting often contain mercury vapor that is released if the tubes are broken or incinerated (burned). However, fluorescent lamps and bulbs are good energy-savers, so to save resources and lower your energy bills, look for low-mercury lamps often characterized by their green end-caps.

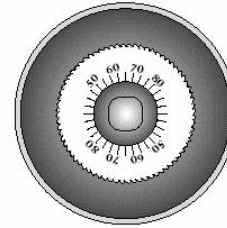
Button Batteries— Commonly found in watches and hearing aids, these may contain a small amount of mercury

Paint—Latex paints manufactured before 1992 contained mercury to prevent the growth of fungus

Blood Pressure Gauges—Home blood pressure gauges contain a large quantity of mercury. An aneroid blood pressure unit is a mercury-free option.

SAFE DISPOSAL OF MERCURY

Instead of throwing away that old thermostat, thermometer, or any other item containing mercury, dispose of it safely to prevent mercury from contaminating our environment.



Residents of Dodge County can drop off small mercury containing items at the Three Rivers Public Health Department, in Fremont. (33 W 4th St)

Residents of Saunders County can drop off small mercury containing items in Wahoo, at the Three Rivers Public Health Department—Saunders County Office (754 W 9th St) OR in Ashland, at the Ashland Pharmacy (1401 Silver St).

Residents of Washington County can drop off small mercury containing items in Blair, at the Barr Pharmacy (1651 Washington St).

Call Three Rivers Public Health Department at (402) 727-5396 or (888) 727-5396 for more information.



CLEANING UP MERCURY SPILLS

If you break a thermometer or other item containing **MERCURY**, contact the Nebraska Mercury Hotline at 1-888-242-1100 (menu choice 4) or the Nebraska Regional Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 for advice on properly cleaning up the spill. The U.S. EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) also provides the following tips to remember when dealing with a mercury spill:

- Immediately remove children and pets from the area
- Clean up the silver mercury beads by using one sheet of paper to carefully roll them onto a second sheet of paper, or use an eye dropper to collect all the beads. Then place the mercury in a plastic bag or other airtight container.
- Don't try to soak up mercury with a towel or rag—that only spreads the mercury, breaking it into smaller beads, making it more difficult to remove.
- Don't use household cleaning products to clean the spill, particularly products that contain ammonia or chlorine. These chemicals will react violently with mercury, releasing a toxic gas.