

Who is the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection and What is the Bureau of Waste Management?

The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection's (NDEP) mission is to preserve and enhance the environment of the state in order to protect public health, sustain healthy ecosystems and contribute to a vibrant economy.

Within NDEP, the Bureau of Waste Management strives to protect public health and conserve natural resources by ensuring safe management of solid and hazardous waste; promoting waste reduction, reuse, and recycling; and reducing the risk of chemical accidents.

The Bureau of Waste Management is composed of three regulatory programs: the hazardous waste management program; solid waste management program; and the chemical accident prevention program. In addition, the Bureau includes a recycling program that is an integral part of the solid waste management program.

Division of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Waste Management
123 West Nye Lane, Room 120
Carson City, NV 89706

Main Phone: 775-687-4670
Recycling Hotline: 1-800-597-5865

What You Need to Know About



Mercury



What is Mercury and Where Does it Come From?

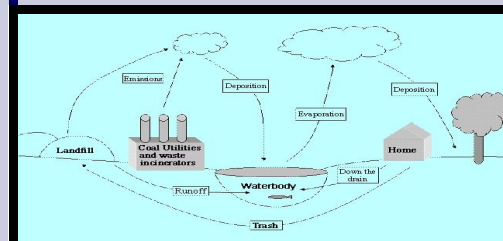


Mercury is a metal, the only one that is liquid at room temperature. It is very dense, and has a high surface tension.

Where is Mercury Found?

Mercury is used in many household products because it conducts electricity, expands uniformly with temperature, and easily forms bonds with other metals. Mercury pollution can contaminate our air, water, and soil. Such contamination can be the result of improperly disposed of mercury or mercury-containing devices. Mercury and mercury-containing devices from the home should be disposed of through your community household hazardous waste program. **If your community does not have a household hazardous waste program please contact the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection at 1-800-597-5865 for other disposal options. DO NOT DISPOSE OF MERCURY DOWN THE DRAIN**, as this can contaminate the ground water through your septic field or the wastewater treatment plant. Mercury pollution also occurs through airborne sources. The largest source of atmospheric mercury results from the burning of fossil fuels, especially coal. Once mercury is released into the atmosphere as a combustion product through smokestacks and exhaust emissions, it can travel long distances, settle on soil and wash into lakes and rivers.

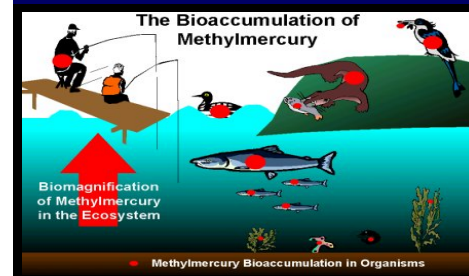
Knowing what products and items contain mercury and handling them and disposing of them properly will reduce mercury levels in the environment. Common products often have a simple and environmentally friendly alternative which will be identified later in this brochure



Mercury and Health Concerns

Mercury is bioaccumulative in organic systems. This means that mercury ingested by an organism will remain in the body. Mercury can effect people's health through both long-term low-level exposures and through short-term acute exposures, such as direct contact with elemental mercury. Mercury can be absorbed through the skin and because elemental mercury vaporizes, the vapors present an inhalation hazard. These are reasons why you should ventilate a room to the outside and wear gloves to avoid all direct contact with mercury.

Mercury in lakes and rivers is converted into methyl mercury by certain bacteria. Fish ingest methyl mercury by swimming or feeding in contaminated water. Methyl mercury accumulates in fish tissue and is carried up the food chain to larger fish, animals and humans. Methyl mercury is dangerous because the concentration of methyl mercury increases as it goes up the food chain.

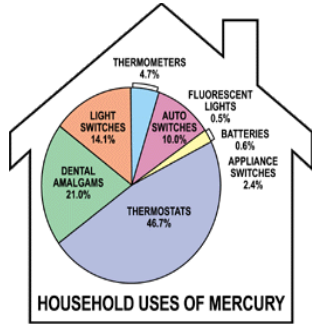


Picture not to scale
From <http://www.ec.gc.ca>



Ever wonder where the term "mad as a hatter" came from? Mercury, once used extensively in the hat making process, caused a brain illness in many hatters. The production process involved using mercury nitrate, to remove fur from pelts and turn it into felt more easily. Hat makers began to experience its effects on their nervous systems. Doctors even recorded seeing "holes the size of quarters" inside some hatters' brains

Mercury Containing Products



Batteries

- Certain alkaline batteries prior to 1998
- Button batteries



Measuring Devices

- Thermometers
- Thermostats
- Barometers
- Manometers
- Certain switches



Novelty Products

Some tennis shoes, toys or cards that light up



Battery in toy contains mercury, dispose of properly. Do not look directly into the light.

Historical Uses

- Certain pigments of latex and oil-based paints pre 1991
- Pesticides / fungicides
- Felt hat manufacturing



Dental Amalgam

Mercury is used in dental fillings because it is durable, inexpensive and able to bond with some metals. Alternative fillings are made of gold, porcelain, ceramic or plastics.



Elemental Mercury and Compounds

- Mercury Oxide
- Mercury Chloride
- Mercury Sulfate
- Mercury Nitrate

Lighting

- Fluorescent lamps
- Mercury vapor lamps
- High-pressure sodium lamps
- Metal halide lamps & neon lamps
- Strobe lights.



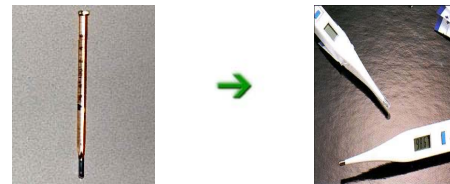
Unfortunately at this time NDEP is not able to accept any lighting that contains mercury. Please call the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection Recycling Hotline for disposal options at 1-800-597-5865.

What Are Some Alternatives To Mercury?

Mercury Thermostats - Replace with electronic thermostats



Mercury Thermometers - Replace with digital or alcohol (red bulb) thermometers



Mercury Switches - Replace with mechanical or electrical switches



Batteries - Replace with mercury free batteries



Barometers - Replace Mercury filled barometers with non-mercury alternative (barometer picture on right is filled with red silicon fluid and gas)



How to Handle a Small Mercury Spill



DO turn off ventilating or air conditioning system and open windows and doors that vent to the outdoors.

DO set aside everything you think might be contaminated with mercury.

DO immediately remove children from the area.

DO make sure to avoid skin contact by wearing gloves when handling spill.



DO 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 it all.

DO place the mercury into a sealable container, such as a plastic bag or any available airtight container.



DON'T try to soak it up with a towel or rag to remove.

DON'T use household cleaning products to clean the spill, particularly products that contain ammonia or chlorine.



DON'T vacuum carpeted floors contaminated with liquid mercury.

If unsure of what to do at anytime during the spill call the NDEP Spill Reporting Hotline at 888-331-6637. For all other mercury disposal concerns contact the Recycling Hotline at 1-800-597-5865.