

Mercury Prevention

Minimizing mercury releases from all sources is important. We must take action to protect ourselves, our children and our environment from mercury contamination. Local and state governments are working in partnership with businesses to develop collection systems for mercury. Here's what you can do:

- Know which products contain mercury.
- Avoid buying products that contain mercury whenever non-mercury substitutes are available.
- Recycle mercury-containing products.
- Conserve energy to reduce reliance on burning fossil fuels such as coal.



Mercury thermometer.

Where Can You Find Assistance?

Whitley County Health Department:
220 W. Van Buren St.
Columbia City, IN. 46725
(260)-248-3121

Whitley County Solid Waste:
(260)-248-3132

Whitley County Emergency Management:
(260)-244-3577

Poison Control:
1-800-382-9097

Emergency Calls:
911

Columbia City WPCF

1171 S. Line St
Columbia City, IN. 46725

Phone: 260-248-5119

2010 Mercury Minimization Program

 Columbia City WPCF



Keep our receiving waters clean.

Tel: 260-248-5119

Why This Brochure Is Important

The City of Columbia City is implementing a mercury minimization program as required by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). The goal of the program is to minimize the amount of mercury entering the wastewater treatment plant and ultimately, the environment. As part of this effort, the City is displaying this brochure to inform you of possible sources of mercury within your house, and how to properly dispose of items containing mercury. We hope that you will help in our efforts to minimize contamination of the environment.

What is Mercury?

Mercury is an element found naturally in the environment, occurring in several forms:

- At room temperature, mercury is the only metal that is liquid. It is shiny, silver-gray in color, and odorless.
- When heated, mercury becomes volatile and the liquid changes into a colorless, odorless gas.
- When combined with other metals such as tin, copper, gold, or silver, mercury alloys are formed.

Mercury and the Environment

Mercury in the air mixes with rain and snow and falls into lakes and waterways. It also reaches the environment through improper disposal of products containing mercury. When mercury is deposited in lakes or waterways, bacteria convert it to methyl mercury, which contaminates the food chain and builds up in the tissue of fish, wildlife, and humans who eat the fish. About one gram of mercury enters a 20-acre lake each year. One gram of mercury is only a small drop: a teaspoon of mercury weighs about 70 grams. By comparison, a typical mercury thermometer contains about 0.5 grams of mercury.

Problems Caused by Mercury

Mercury is a nerve toxin that may impair the way we see, hear, walk and talk. Breathing mercury vapor affects the human brain, spinal cord, eyes, and kidneys. It may cause:

- Mood changes
- Inability to concentrate
- Memory loss
- Shaking, tingling, or loss of feeling in the hand, tongue, or eyelid
- Discoloration of the cornea and lens of the eye
- Vision disturbances
- Kidney disease

Swallowing mercury compounds may cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

If a **pregnant woman** is exposed to mercury, her **unborn child** may experience damage to vision, hearing, taste, smell, memory, and mental ability. **Small children** are more susceptible than adults to mercury poisoning.

Everyday Sources of Mercury and Alternative Products

Items Containing Mercury

- Thermometers with silver colored liquid inside
- Non-electronic thermostats
- Pilot light sensors in some gas appliances such as ovens, clothes dryers, water heaters, furnaces, and space heaters
- Vintage toys-drawing screens and mercury maze games
- Antiseptic products containing thimerosal or merbromin such as nasal sprays or contact lens solutions (check label)
- Pre-1997 tennis shoes with light-up soles (check label)
- Pre-1990 Latex Paint
- Button-type Batteries (hearing aid batteries)

Alternatives

- Alcohol thermometers (red bulb) or digital
- Electronic models
- When making new purchases, look for hot surface ignition systems for devices or products having electrical connections
- Toys which are mercury-free
- Mercury-free sprays or solutions
- Mercury-free shoes (check label)
- Latex Paint produced after 1990
- Lithium, zinc air, or alkaline batteries