



# WHAT IF A MERCURY-CONTAINING THERMOMETER BREAKS

**How do I know if a broken thermometer contained mercury?** If the liquid is silver, it may be mercury. However, if there is a paper strip in the thermometer that says it's mercury-free, it is safe and you can clean and dispose of it normally.

## WHAT TO DO

**1 EVACUATE PEOPLE OR ANIMALS IN THE AREA**

Open windows and doors to the outside. Close all interior doors to the affected room and seal off air ducts with **plastic** and **tape**.



**2 CLEAN UP THE GLASS AND MERCURY**


**GLASS**

- Pick up any broken glass with **rubber, nitrile or latex gloves**.
- Place glass on a **paper towel** and then put the paper towel in a **sealable container or plastic bag**.
- Use **tape** to remove any remaining small glass fragments.

**MERCURY**


- Look for beads, drops and small amounts of mercury (silver liquid).
- Use **cardboard, stiff paper** or an **eye dropper** to slowly place mercury on a **damp paper towel** and then put the paper towel in a **sealable container or plastic bag**.
- Turn the lights out and use a **flashlight** to look for any additional mercury.
- To pick up any hard to see beads of mercury, use **shaving cream** on the tip of a **small paint brush** and gently touch the affected. Put the used paintbrush and shaving cream into a **sealable container or plastic bag**.

Put the sealable container/plastic bag(s) in a **labeled garbage bag** and store outdoors in a secure location until it can be disposed. Then wash your hands.



**3 FINAL STEPS**

Ventilate the area with **fans** so that air flows from clean parts of the home through the area where the spill occurred and to the outside for 24 hours. Keep people and pets away during that time. Call your local solid waste services center, the fire department or municipal waste authority for proper disposal of the garbage bag.



## WHAT NOT TO DO


**Do not walk into other rooms if your shoes or clothing might have mercury on them.** It will spread into other rooms and be harder to clean up and contain.



**Never use a vacuum to clean up a mercury spill.** The vacuum will become contaminated and will disperse mercury vapors into the air.



**Don't sweep up mercury droplets with a broom.** The droplets will break down into smaller sizes, becoming more difficult to capture and increasing the amount of vapor released.



**Never pour mercury down the drain.** It will settle in the drain trap.



**What to do for larger mercury spills?** If more than two tablespoons of mercury were spilled: evacuate people and pets, seal off the area and the air conditioning ducts. Then immediately call your local solid waste services center, the fire department or the National Response Center at 800-424-8802.