

# Mercury Clean-Up Guidelines

## (for broken thermometers)

The following guidelines pertain to only broken thermometers containing mercury. If there is a larger spill of mercury (> 1 pound), contact EH&S immediately at x4763.

1. When a spill occurs, isolate the area to prevent people from entering the spill area and spreading contamination. Use warning signs and barrier tape, lock doors, or other similar actions.
2. Distinguish where the farthest beads are located. A flashlight may help to locate the smallest beads of mercury.
3. Make a perimeter of the isolated area three feet beyond the most distant visible beads of mercury.
4. Locate a mercury spill kit, either in your lab or from EH&S.
5. Prior to clean-up, remove all gold or silver rings, watches, and/or bracelets. Mercury readily bonds to metal. *Latex gloves, goggles, and a lab coat* shall be worn during the mercury clean-up. Disposable shoe coverings may be worn to minimize contamination.
6. Begin your clean-up at the outer perimeter of the spill.
7. Several procedures can be conducted:
  - Mercury absorbing powder may be used; the powder will form a solid and is much easier to handle (follow directions on bottle). A sponge or paper can be used to collect the solid material.
  - The mercury can also be sucked up with a syringe, disposable pipette, or eye dropper.
  - A dustpan and brush can also be used to collect the mercury.
8. Once all mercury has been collected, place the waste into a bag or plastic container and label the outside. All items used for the clean-up must also be disposed of.
9. Mercury beads will often be pinhead size, or smaller. Reclean the spill site and perimeter, if necessary. Pay close attention to cracks and crevices.