

Title: Mercury Spill Cleanup Guidelines	Document No.: CH-012-A
	Revision No.: 00 Date: 8-27-09
	Approved By: AI Swavy

- 1.0 **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for what steps to take after a mercury spill. Elemental, or liquid mercury, is a toxic material that can commonly be found in thermometers, manometers, vacuum pumps, and switches. When spilled, mercury often fragments into small beads that can bounce and roll away from the original spill location. This can make it difficult to clean up a spill.
- 2.0 **Scope:** Policy applies to all university laboratories, research areas, art studios, and other spaces serviced by UB Environment, Health and Safety
- 3.0 **Applicable Guidelines:** Refer to UB Hazardous Chemical Waste Management guidebook information concerning the management and disposal of hazardous wastes.
- 4.0 **Responsibilities:** The primary responsibility for following this policy rests with the principal investigator or supervisor of the area where mercury and/or mercury containing devices may be located. Any researchers, students or other employees who work in those areas must be trained and made aware of this policy.
- 5.0 **Definitions:**
- 5.1 Large mercury spill. If the amount of spilled mercury amounts to greater than what is normally present in a standard thermometer, it will be considered a large mercury spill for the purposes of this policy. Large mercury spills are NOT to be cleaned up by anyone other than EHS.
- 5.2 Small mercury spill. If what is spilled amounts to less than what would be present in a standard thermometer, it will be considered a small spill for the purposes of this policy.
- 6.0 **Procedures:**
- 6.1 If you have been trained in the use of a spill kit and you feel comfortable using one, you may cleanup a small mercury spill using the spill kit located in your lab. If you do not have a spill kit, a large amount of mercury has spilled, you cannot locate the spilled mercury or you do not otherwise wish to clean up the spill, contact EHS for further assistance.
- 6.2 Ensure all people that are present in the area of the spill leave and keep others from entering that location.
- 6.3 Put on booties supplied in spill kit along with 2 pair of nitrile gloves and a lab coat. Determine the extent of the spill.
- 6.4 Try to minimize the chance that mercury will migrate under a cabinet or other less accessible area by not using a broom; the mercury beads will just roll across the floor. Never use a standard vacuum cleaner or shop vac. A vacuum cleaner designed specially for mercury cleanups and operated by EHS must only be utilized for spill cleanups. Don't use household cleaning products containing ammonia or chlorine. They can react strongly with mercury and produce poisonous gas.
- 6.5 Work from outside the spill area using 3 x 5 index cards or stiff paper by moving the mercury together to form a larger droplet of bead. At this point you can push the

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collected material into a dust pan or use a pipette. Carefully place the mercury into a sealed plastic bag. Label the bag with a UB hazardous waste label and contact EHS for disposal.

6.6 If the mercury spill involves broken glass such as from a thermometer, sweep the pieces up carefully and place in the same plastic bag along with the 3 x 5 cards, paper towels, etc.

6.7 Remove your booties, gloves and any other disposable PPE and place in a plastic bag. Affix a UB hazardous waste label to it and contact EHS for disposal.

7.0 **Document Management:** This procedure shall be reviewed once every two years, or as changes require.

8.0 Associated UB Documents:

8.1 *Campus Commitment to Safety*, University at Buffalo, Office of the Provost, Office of the Senior Vice President, April 3, 2001.

9.0 Associated EH&S Documents:

9.1 EHS Hazardous Chemical Waste Guidebook

10.0 Document Revision History:

Revision	Section(s) Changed	Change(s) Made:	Date
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12.0 **Document Author:** Anthony Oswald, Hazardous Waste Manager, Environment, Health and Safety