



MERCURY SAFETY ALERT

Livermore has experienced two significant mercury spills in the past three months. The police and fire departments have been unable to determine the source of this mercury. It is critical that if additional mercury from this source exists that be safety contained and disposed of.



We are asking anyone who may have any information to please contact the Livermore Police Department at 925-371-4900. We would also like to take this opportunity to encourage anyone else who may have mercury to eliminate this serious hazard from their home by properly dispose of it as described below.

Mercury has Many Uses. Mercury is a silver, liquid metal that releases mercury vapors at room temperature. It has commonly been used in gold prospecting, industrial switches, barometers and thermometers, and other industrial applications. Due to health and environmental hazards, the use of mercury is being reduced. For example, mercury fever thermometers are being phased out.



Health Hazards of Mercury are Serious. Mercury is not easily absorbed through the skin, so touching it or even swallowing it does not present a significant health risk. However, the vapors are very toxic. Mercury spills inside buildings present a severe problem because the vapors accumulate inside and poses a serious health hazard. In the environment mercury is converted to methyl mercury, which is readily absorbed into the body when ingested. Because the body has difficulty eliminating methyl mercury, it can accumulate in the body to toxic levels, even when it is present in the environment at very low levels.

Symptoms of Mercury Exposure. The symptoms of chronic, low level mercury exposure can include skin rashes, mood swings, memory loss, mental disturbance, impairment of speech and hearing, as well as a number of other neurological effects. High levels of exposure can cause numbness, weakness of the legs, spastic paralysis and impaired vision, and, in very severe cases, blindness, coma and even death. Anyone who is concerned that they or someone in their family has been exposed to mercury should consult their doctor. Additional information about the health effects of mercury can be obtained at the US EPA website. The address is www.epa.gov/mercury/health.htm.

Mercury Spills are an Emergency. In the event of a mercury spill, please call 911. The Livermore Pleasanton Fire Department has on hand equipment to deal with small spills, and has access to additional resources in the case of larger spills.

Many People have Mercury at Home. Because of the many ways mercury has been used, and its unique and interesting properties, many people have mercury at home, in most cases in older thermometers. In some cases, often associated with gold prospecting, people have larger quantities. Because of the health and environmental hazards of mercury, the Cities of Livermore and Pleasanton, the Livermore Pleasanton Fire Department and the Alameda County Household Hazardous Waste collection facility encourage people to properly dispose of any mercury they have in their homes.



Exchange Your Mercury Thermometer for Free! The cities of Livermore and Pleasanton both have thermometer exchange programs where residents can trade in old mercury thermometers for new, mercury free thermometers. In Livermore call 925-960-8100 for details. In Pleasanton call 925-931-5511.

Dispose of Mercury and Mercury Devices for Free! The Alameda County Household Hazardous Waste collection facility accepts mercury free of charge. They will accept containers of liquid mercury, mercury switches, barometers, manometers, etc. They also accept a wide variety of other hazardous products. The facility is located at 5584 La Ribera Street in Livermore. They also have facilities in Hayward and Oakland. The Livermore facility is open one Thursday, Friday and Saturday each month. They can be contacted at 800-606-6606. The direct link to their website is <http://www.stopwaste.org/home/index.asp?page=293>

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:

Operating Hours: Thursday, Friday and Saturday: 9 AM to 1 PM

Thurs	Fri	Sat
January 19	January 20	January 21
February 16	February 17	February 18
March 16	March 17	March 18
April 13	April 14	April 15
May 18	May 19	May 20
June 15	June 16	June 17

Questions or Concerns? If you have any questions or concerns regarding mercury, please call Danielle Stefani, Hazardous Materials Coordinator at the Fire Department at 925-454-2338 or dstefani@lpfire.org.