



## Switch Out Mercury Clean-up Instructions

### What to Do if a Mercury-containing Glass Convenience Light Switch Breaks

If a mercury-containing glass convenience light switch breaks in your facility, follow these specific clean-up instructions:

1. Have everyone else leave the area and don't let anyone walk through the mercury on their way out. Make sure all pets are removed from the area. Open all windows and doors to the outside, and shut all doors to other parts of the building.
2. Put on rubber, nitrile or latex gloves.
3. If there are any broken pieces of glass or sharp objects, pick them up with care. Place all broken objects on a paper towel. Fold the paper towel and place in a zip lock bag. Secure the bag and label it as containing mercury.
4. Locate visible mercury beads. Use a squeegee or piece of cardboard to gather the mercury beads. Use slow sweeping motions to keep mercury from becoming uncontrollable. Take a flashlight, hold it at a low angle close to the floor in a darkened room and look for additional glistening beads of mercury that may be sticking to the surface or in small cracked areas of the surface. Note: Mercury can move surprising distances on hard-flat surfaces, so be sure to inspect the entire room when "searching."
5. Use an eyedropper to collect or draw up the mercury beads. Slowly and carefully squeeze the mercury onto a damp paper towel. Place the paper towel in a zip lock bag, secure the bag and label as containing mercury.
6. After you remove larger beads, use duct tape to collect smaller hard-to-see beads. Place the duct tape in a zip lock bag, secure the bag and label as containing mercury.
7. Place all materials used during the clean-up, including gloves, in a trash bag. Place all mercury beads and objects into the trash bag. Secure trash bag and label it as containing mercury.
8. Contact your municipal waste authority for proper disposal in accordance with local, provincial and federal laws.

9. Remember to keep the spill area well ventilated to the outside (i.e., windows open and fans in exterior windows running) for at least 24 hours after your successful clean-up. Continue to keep pets and children out of clean-up area. If sickness occurs, seek medical attention immediately.

**Recommendation:** If there are young children or pregnant women in the building at the time of the spill, seek additional advice from your local health department.

### **What Never to Do with a Mercury Spill**

- Never use a vacuum cleaner to clean up mercury. The vacuum will put mercury into the air and increase exposure.
- Never use a broom to clean up mercury. It will break the mercury into smaller droplets and spread them.
- Never pour mercury down a drain. It may lodge in the plumbing and cause future problems during plumbing repairs. If discharged, it can cause pollution of the septic tank or sewage treatment plant.
- Never wash clothing or other items that have come in direct contact with mercury in a washing machine, because mercury may contaminate the machine and/or pollute sewage. Clothing that has come into direct contact with mercury should be discarded. By "direct contact," we mean that mercury was spilled directly on the clothing.
- Never walk around if your shoes might be contaminated with mercury. Contaminated clothing can also spread mercury around.

### **First Aid Measures**

If individuals are exposed to mercury during a spill, there are a few simple procedures that should be followed.

**Skin contact** — Remove any clothing that has absorbed the mercury, seal in a double plastic bag and dispose of properly. Wash the area of contact with soap and water and seek medical attention promptly.

**Eye contact** — Flush eyes with room temperature water for at least 15 minutes. Lift upper and lower lids to rinse beneath them as well. Seek medical attention promptly.

**Inhalation** — Move the person to an area where they can get fresh air. Seek medical attention promptly.

**Ingestion** — Seek medical attention immediately.