

# Disposing of Mercury

## Dispose of mercury the right way!

Bring the following mercury items to Disposal of Toxics:

- ✓ Thermometers
- ✓ Barometers
- ✓ Auto switches
- ✓ Compact fluorescent tubes/light bulbs
- ✓ Thermostats
- ✓ Button cell batteries

For more information on additional mercury-containing items, please call the Disposal of Toxics Program.

### When handling products with mercury:

Do not break, crush, or disassemble the items. Store items out of the way in bubble wrap or boxes until you can take them to the Disposal of Toxics facility:

### Disposal of Toxics

**3505 Airport Drive, Bellingham  
(one block west of the airport entrance)  
360-380-4640**

**Open Monday — Friday 9 am - 4 pm  
First Saturday of every month 9 am - 4 pm**

If a product is accidentally broken, do NOT touch it, sweep it, or vacuum it. Keep children and pets away from the spill. Call the Whatcom County Health Department for spill assistance 360-676-6724.

Never put mercury-containing products or anything contaminated with mercury in the garbage or down the drain. Call the Disposal of Toxics collection facility for more disposal information.

# Mercury Resources

## For more information on mercury, check out the following:

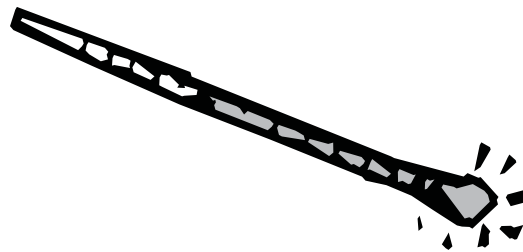
Environmental Protection Agency mercury information: [www.epa.gov/mercury](http://www.epa.gov/mercury)

Mercury Awareness, Washington State Department of Ecology, Publication #01-04-022, Revised December 2003: [www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0104022.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0104022.pdf)

Mercury Fact Sheet, Washington Toxics Coalition, February 2004: [www.watoxics.org/content/pdf/mercuryfactsheet.pdf](http://www.watoxics.org/content/pdf/mercuryfactsheet.pdf)

US EPA page on cleaning up small mercury spills: <http://www.epa.gov/hg/spills/>

Pictures and information about necklaces with liquid mercury pendants: [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/iaq/mercurynecklaces.html](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/iaq/mercurynecklaces.html)



## Whatcom County Public Works Solid Waste Division

322 N. Commercial, Suite #220  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
Phone: 360-676-7695  
Recycling Hotline: 360-676-5723  
[www.whatcomcounty.us/publicworks/solidwaste](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/publicworks/solidwaste)



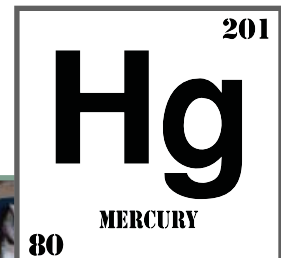
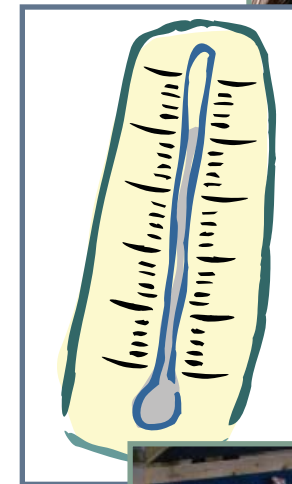
**Questions?** Call the Recycling Hotline  
**360-676-5723**

Whatcom County Public Works  
Solid Waste Division

# The Hazards of Mercury



Protecting Your Family



Printed on 100% recycled paper.

# Mercury Hazards

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that conducts electricity and expands and contracts in response to changes in temperature and pressure. At room temperature, it is a liquid. These properties of mercury have led to its use in the industrial sector as well as in many consumer products. Unfortunately, mercury and its compounds can have serious effects on the health of humans and wildlife.

Mercury is highly toxic and can harm the brain, kidneys, and lungs. Unborn and young children are particularly at risk because their nervous systems are still developing.

Human exposure to mercury occurs most frequently as a result of eating mercury-contaminated fish. Mercury released to the environment from products such as broken thermometers may ultimately end up in water bodies, contaminating fish and wildlife.

## Mercury in Household Products

Mercury is found in many of the everyday items we use, from light bulbs to thermostats. You can properly dispose of all of these products at the Disposal of Toxics facility. In many cases, you can switch to mercury-free alternatives.

Keep reading to learn about some common household products that contain mercury.

- *Mercury facts:*
- ❖ *One drop of mercury entering a 20-acre lake annually is enough to elevate the mercury level in fish.*
- ❖ *One teaspoon holds about 70 drops of mercury.*
- ❖ *The average thermometer holds 1-4 drops depending on size.*

# Mercury in Household Products

## Fluorescent Lamps

Mercury is used in the fluorescent-tube, compact fluorescent, and high-intensity discharge (HID) lamps. These light bulbs are very energy efficient, but they need to be disposed of properly at Disposal of Toxics.



## Thermometers

Mercury's sensitivity to temperature change makes it useful for thermometers. It is used in glass thermometers and can be easily identified by the presence of silver liquid. Digital and ethanol (red liquid) thermometers are mercury-free alternatives.

## Thermostats

Mercury is used in older thermostat switches that control temperature changes in heating and air conditioning systems. Newer, digital thermostats do not use mercury.



## Automobile Switches

Mercury is used in vehicle mechanisms to turn on lights when the hood, trunk, or doors are opened, and/or to operate some anti-lock brake systems. Mercury-containing auto switches have been phased out of new cars in Washington State beginning January 1, 2006.

## Batteries

Mercury prevents internal discharge and gassing in batteries. Since 1994, federal law has prohibited intentional addition of mercury to standard household batteries (dry-cell sizes A, AA, C, D, etc.) and has limited the amount of mercury added to button cell batteries.



## Mercury in Fish



Although fish is a nutritious food—it is low in fat and is a good source of protein and other nutrients—some fish contain levels of mercury that are unhealthy for human consumption.

The Department of Health has advised women of childbearing age and children under six to avoid certain types of fish that have high amounts of mercury including shark, swordfish, tilefish, king mackerel and fresh-caught or frozen tuna.

Women of childbearing age should not eat more than one can of tuna fish per week (or six ounces). A woman or child who weighs under 135 pounds should eat less than one can of tuna per week. Children under six should eat less than half of a can of tuna (three ounces) per week.



For more information on mercury in fish and Fish Consumption Advisories, visit: [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp).