

## Where Is Mercury In My Home?

Many household items may contain mercury. Use the Mercury Search checklist to conduct your home inventory. These items pose no threat to you or your family when used properly. They can be hazardous if misused or improperly disposed. Look for these mercury containing items in your home:

- Fever thermometers and antiseptic products that contain thimerosal or merbromin in the bathroom, kitchen or bedroom.
- Fluorescent lights in the bathroom, basement, garage or shed.
- Mercury thermostats.
- Clothes irons in the broom closet, kitchen, laundry room or bedroom.

## How Can I Prevent Mercury Pollution?

Minimizing mercury releases from all sources is important. Local and state governments are working in partnership with businesses to develop collection systems for mercury. Here's what you can do:

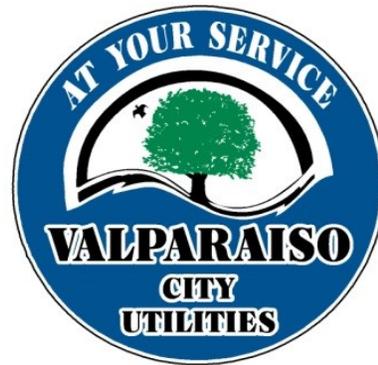
- Know which items contain mercury. Use the Mercury Checklist that accompanies this brochure to do an inventory of mercury containing items in your home.
- Avoid buying products that contain mercury, except fluorescent light bulbs. Fluorescent lights use less electricity than incandescent bulbs.
- Label or use a "Contains Mercury-Recycle" sticker to identify mercury containing items.
- Conserve energy to reduce coal burning for electricity generation.
- Properly recycle mercury containing items, such as batteries or thermostats.

## How Do I Dispose Of Mercury Containing Items Safely?

You should first contact Porter County Recycling & Waste Reduction at (219) 465-3694 or visit their website [www.portercountyrecycling.org](http://www.portercountyrecycling.org)

Things to remember when disposing of objects containing mercury:

- Never break open items that contain mercury.
- Never pour mercury down the drain.
- Never burn mercury.
- Never put mercury in the trash.



[www.ci.valparaiso.in.us](http://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us)

**Industrial Pretreatment  
Valparaiso City Utilities  
Water Reclamation Department  
1251 Joliet Road  
Valparaiso, IN 46385  
(219) 462-6174 x 1366**

## Valparaiso City Utilities M.A.P. Mercury Awareness Program



## What Is Mercury?

Mercury, also known as quicksilver, is one of 92 natural occurring elements in our world. It is a metal that conducts electricity and is liquid at room temperature. Because of these properties, mercury has been used in many household, medical, industrial and scientific products.

Although mercury does perform many useful functions in our workplaces and homes, it is toxic and can impair the way we see, hear and function.

Mercury evaporates slowly. If spilled or improperly stored, the evaporation of mercury will cause continuous contamination of the air you breathe.



Mercury poisoning via breathing contaminated air will attack the central nervous system in all humans. Children, especially those under the age of 6, are most susceptible to mercury poisoning.

Less than a third of the mercury in the environment is naturally occurring. The majority of mercury in the environment is released through human activities. It can enter the atmosphere, lakes and streams from coal burning for power generation, from industrial sources and by improper disposal of mercury containing scientific and household products.

When mercury seeps into lakes and waterways, it undergoes a natural chemical process and is converted to methyl mercury. It can contaminate the food chain by building up in the tissue of fish and animals. The State of Indiana will issue fish consumption advisories due to high mercury concentrations found in fish. The advisories are available from your local health department.



## Mercury Checklist:

- ◆ **Thermometers:** silver colored liquid inside.
- ◆ **Thermostats:** nonelectric.
- ◆ **Fluorescent and other Mercury Vapor Lighting:** HID (high intensity discharge), metal halide, high pressure sodium and neon bulbs.
- ◆ **Automotive Headlamps:** blue tint when lit.
- ◆ **Pilot Light Sensors:** in some gas appliances: stoves, ovens, clothes dryers, water heaters, furnaces and space heaters.
- ◆ **Gauges:** barometers, manometers, blood pressure and vacuum gauges with silver colored liquid.
- ◆ **Switches and Relays:** in some chest freezers, pre-1972 washing machines, sump pump and bilge pumps, electric space heaters, silent light switches, vehicles and farm equipment.
- ◆ **Clothes Irons:** automatic or tilt shut offs.
- ◆ **Elemental Mercury:** silver colored liquid metal sometimes found in children's chemistry sets.
- ◆ **Vintage Toys:** paint on toys and mercury maze games.
- ◆ **LA Gear Athletic Shoes:** made before 1997 with flashing lights in soles.
- ◆ **Batteries:** mercuric oxide and some alkaline batteries.
- ◆ **Paint:** latex manufactured before 1990, and some oil base paints; check label.
- ◆ **Thimerosal or Merbromin:** in some antibacterial products.
- ◆ **Look for Other Items:** this list is not complete.

Mercury is toxic in small quantities. It only takes 3 grams (approximately 1/25 of a teaspoon) of mercury to contaminate a 60 acre lake.

- ◇ A typical mercury fever thermometer contains about 0.6 grams of mercury per USEPA.
- ◇ A mercury switch contains about 3.5 grams of mercury.
- ◇ A mercury thermostat contains about 3 grams of mercury.
- ◇ 100 4 foot fluorescent bulbs contain about 4 grams of mercury.



## For More Information Or Assistance Call:

Porter County Recycling and Waste Reduction  
District (219) 465-3694  
[www.portercountyrecycling.org](http://www.portercountyrecycling.org)

Indiana Department of Environmental Management  
(317) 232-8603. [www.in.gov/idem/4245.htm](http://www.in.gov/idem/4245.htm)

Industrial Pretreatment  
Valparaiso City Utilities  
Water Reclamation Department  
(219) 462-6174 x1366  
[www.ci.valparaiso.in.us](http://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us)

**A Little Bit of Mercury is a Lot**