

NMSU Mercury Remediation Plan

This plan has been developed in order to reduce the risks associated with mercury contamination of the wastewater stream. The plan is to safe-guard or eliminate all sources of mercury, mercury compounds, and mercury containing devices on NMSU.

Phase One: Mandated January 2003

Replace all mercury thermometers used in the teaching laboratories with non-mercury thermometers and encourage the elimination or replacement of mercury thermometers, devices and excess stored mercury from all research laboratories. All mercury, mercury compounds, and mercury containing devices are to be included in NMSU HazCom chemical inventory (see item 4 below).

Phase Two: 2004

Further encourage the elimination or replacement of all non-essential mercury devices in the research laboratories. Recommend that departments offer alcohol based or digital thermometers free to research labs in exchange for mercury ones. Encourage the safe-guarding of all essential mercury devices (see safe guarding below). Continue increased monitor testing of wastewater for mercury and implement replacement of laboratory sink traps as designated by EH&S and OFS (this portion still ongoing).

Phase Three:

Inspection of all research laboratories for compliance to the mercury remediation plan. Bring those laboratories (that have not already done so) into compliance with the mercury remediation process.

Mercury Remediation Process for Research Laboratories:

Identify all mercury, mercury compounds and mercury containing devices in each laboratory. This should involve a drawer by drawer search of the entire laboratory. Report all mercury and mercury containing devices in laboratory and other buildings via the Hazcom inventory system (see item 4 below).

Determine if the identified mercury is essential to the operation of the laboratory:

1. If the mercury containing device is no longer used...get rid of it. Simply call EH&S (646-3327) for pick-up and they will dispose of it for you. You will need to complete a waste tracking form but they will collect it and dispose of it properly.
2. If the mercury containing device is used and needed for the laboratory, but can be replaced with a non-mercury containing device then replace it and have EH&S remove the old device (as above). This may cost a couple of bucks, but the reductions in the risk associated with mercury spills are huge!
3. If the device is both essential and cannot be replaced with a non-mercury containing alternative then the mercury or mercury compounds within the device or container

must be reported via the inventory system and then safe-guarded from breakage and spillage. This is especially critical for breakable or corrodible devices and containers. Safe-guarding the mercury from future accidental release may involve one or more of the following:

- To prevent breakage...install strong **bumper guards** around exposed breakable parts (especially glass parts).
 - To contain mercury in the event of a spill...use **secondary containment** (place the device in a pan or affix a solid barrier under or around it).
 - To prevent tipping or falling...move it to a **safer location** (away from the edge of a shelf or away from a high traffic area) or secure the device to a stable support (like a wall or a frame work).
 - To prevent accidents due to neglect...do **regular inspection & maintenance** on the equipment and create a safe place for its proper storage.
4. Report the existence of all mercury, mercury compounds, and mercury containing devices in your laboratory and work area to EH&S. This is to be done for these as well as all chemicals stored in your lab through the EH&S on-line HazCom web Database. The website is located at www.nmsu.edu/~safety/ To use click on “Inventory” then on “HazCom Web Database”. Then begin a new record (or update existing) for each area. Call or email EH&S if you have problems.

Contact Information

Environmental Health& Safety:

Main office: MSC-3578, Academic Research Ctr. Unit C, 4200 Research Drive.

Training Office: Genesis Complex Unit B (see [map](#) on website),

Telephone: 505-646-3327; FAX: 505-646-7898

To send an email to EH&S, go the NMSU safety website (www.nmsu.edu/~safety/) and click the suggestion/comment tab.