

## ANNEX "D"

### How to Handle Mercury Spills

A Mercury Spill Cleanup Kit can be used to clean up small mercury spills in hospitals. Ideally, for medical facilities, one kit should be available for every 20 beds. A Mercury Spill Kit can be purchased or created in-house. The contents of the kit should include:

- 4-5 zip lock bags
- Trash bags (2-6 mm thick)
- Rubber or latex gloves
- Paper Towels
- Cardboard Paper
- Syringe (without needle)
- Masking or duct tape
- Flashlight
- Powdered sulfur (optional)
- Marker for labeling trash bags and zip lock bags
- Small sealable containers for waste mercury. (i.e. empty photo film canister)

#### Cleanup Instructions

1. Remove all jewelry from hands and wrists so the mercury does not combine (amalgamate) with the precious metals. Change into old clothes and shoes that can be safely discarded should they happen to become contaminated.
2. Remove everyone from the area where cleanup will take place. Shut door of impacted area. Turn off interior ventilation system to avoid dispersing mercury vapor.
3. Mercury can be cleaned up easily from the following surfaces: wood, linoleum, tile and any other like surfaces. If a spill occurs on carpet, curtains, upholstery or other like surfaces, these contaminated items should be thrown away in accordance with the disposal means outlined below. Only cut and remove the affected portion of the contaminated carpet for disposal.
4. Put on rubber or latex gloves.
5. If there are any broken pieces of glass or sharp objects, pick them up with care.
6. 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.
7. Locate visible mercury beads. Use a squeegee or cardboard to gather mercury beads. Use slow sweeping motions to keep mercury from becoming uncontrollable. Take a flashlight, hold it at a low angle close to 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 distance on hard-flat surfaces, so search thoroughly.

8. Use the eyedropper to collect or draw up the mercury beads. Slowly and carefully squeeze mercury on to a damp paper towel. Place the paper towel in a zip lock bag and secure. Make sure to label the bag.
9. After you remove larger beads, put shaving cream on top of small paint brush and gently "dot" the affected area to pick up smaller hard-to-see beads. Alternatively, use duct tape to collect smaller hard-to-see beads. Place the paint brush or duct tape in a zip lock bag and secure. Make sure to label the bag.
10. OPTIONAL STEP: Use powdered sulfur to absorb the beads that are too small to see. The sulfur does two things: (1) it makes the mercury easier to see since there may be a color change from yellow to brown and (2) it binds the mercury and suppressed the vapor of any missing mercury.

Note: When using powdered sulfur, do not breathe in the powder as it can be moderately toxic.

11. Place all materials used with the cleanup, including gloves, in a trash bag. Place all mercury beads and objects into the trash bag. Secure trash bag and label it.
12. Remember to keep the area well ventilated to the outside for at least 24 hours after your successful cleanup. The trash, zip bags and all other materials used in the cleanup should be stored and contained in a safe place.

Unfortunately, all we can do right now is to contain the mercury. There is no program yet in the Philippines for its ultimate disposal. You may want to talk with other health care centers, your local government unit, or the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to address this issue of temporary storage and ultimate disposal of mercury.

If you need more information, see:

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/mercury/fag/spills.htm> or the website of the Mercury in Health Care SE Asia Conference:  
[www.mercuryfreeHealth Care.org](http://www.mercuryfreeHealthCare.org).