HAZARDOUS MATERIALS
(Handling and Disposal of Mercury)

The purpose of this procedure is to reduce the risk of mercury exposure to students, staff and visitors of the district. Mercury is a neurotoxin that can damage the nervous system and kidneys as well as other systems and organs. Because mercury vapor is rapidly absorbed through the lungs, district staff must respond to a mercury spill immediately and appropriately.

Procurement

No employee of the district will purchase mercury-containing products when mercury-free substitutes are available. Where mercury-free products are not available, lower-mercury products will be used.

Inventory

The facilities director will conduct an audit to identify possible sources of elemental mercury in district facilities using the Mercury Audit Checklist from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or a similar document from another appropriate source. The results of the audit will be shared with building administrators.

Disposal

Unwanted mercury containing materials will be disposed of using universal waste procedures. Unwanted laboratory chemicals, including jars of elemental mercury, must be managed as hazardous waste and packaged, labeled, transported and disposed of in accordance with state regulations. Fluorescent lamps will be recycled.

Preparation

The facilities director will purchase commercial mercury spill kits and place them in every building that contains mercury. As an alternative to purchasing a commercial kit, the school principal may create a kit by assembling the following items:

1. Rubber, nitrile or vinyl gloves
2. Safety glasses
3. Eye dropper or syringe (no needle)
4. Playing cards
5. Rubber squeegee
6. Duct tape or other heavy duty tape

7. Plastic container with lid or heavy duty plastic zip bags
8. Flashlight

Training

The facilities director will regularly train a minimum of two (2) district staff members who regularly work in each building that contains mercury on the:

1. Sources of mercury in the building.
2. Location of the mercury spill kits.
3. Process for appropriately cleaning mercury spills as outlined in this procedure.

Small Spill Procedures

Note: Never use a vacuum cleaner or broom to clean up a mercury spill and never dump mercury down the drain or place it in the trash.

1. Evacuate the area of the spill leaving clothes, shoes and other articles splashed with mercury at the spill site.

2. Wash skin exposed to mercury with soap and water.

3. Turn off heating/air conditioning to prevent mercury vapors from spreading.

4. Isolate the spill site.

5. Ventilate the spill area by opening windows and using exhaust fans that ventilate to the outdoors, and continue to ventilate for 24 hours after clean up.

6. Remove jewelry from hands and wrists and put on protective gloves, safety glasses and clothing that can be easily discarded if contaminated.

7. Inspect the area with the flashlight to locate the mercury.

8. Pick up the mercury drops by following the directions in the commercial spill kit or by using the squeegee or playing cards to concentrate the spill in a small area.

9. Once concentrated, the beads can be picked up using the dropper or syringe.

10. Place the beads in the plastic container or zip bag.

11. After all visible beads have been picked up, reinspect with the flashlight and continue cleaning if necessary.

12. Double-bag all mercury and contaminated substances.

13. Call the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Environmental Response 24-hour hotline at 573-634-2436.

Large Spill Procedures

For spills of greater than one (1) pound, follow steps one (1) through five (5) above and then contact DNR.

* * * * * * *

Note: The reader is encouraged to review policies and/or forms for related information in this administrative area.

Implemented: 08/16/2007

Cole County R-I School District, Russellville, Missouri