



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Residential Mercury Spill Cleanup

Lutherville, Baltimore County, Maryland



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 3

February 25, 2009

Mercury Spill Cleanup Begins...

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in cooperation with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), is cleaning up a mercury spill inside a home located in Lutherville, MD. The cleanup consists of a single house and property.

Mercury is difficult to remove from homes because the liquid beads can get into cracks of flooring tiles and shoe bottoms; and absorb into materials such as carpet, clothing and furniture.

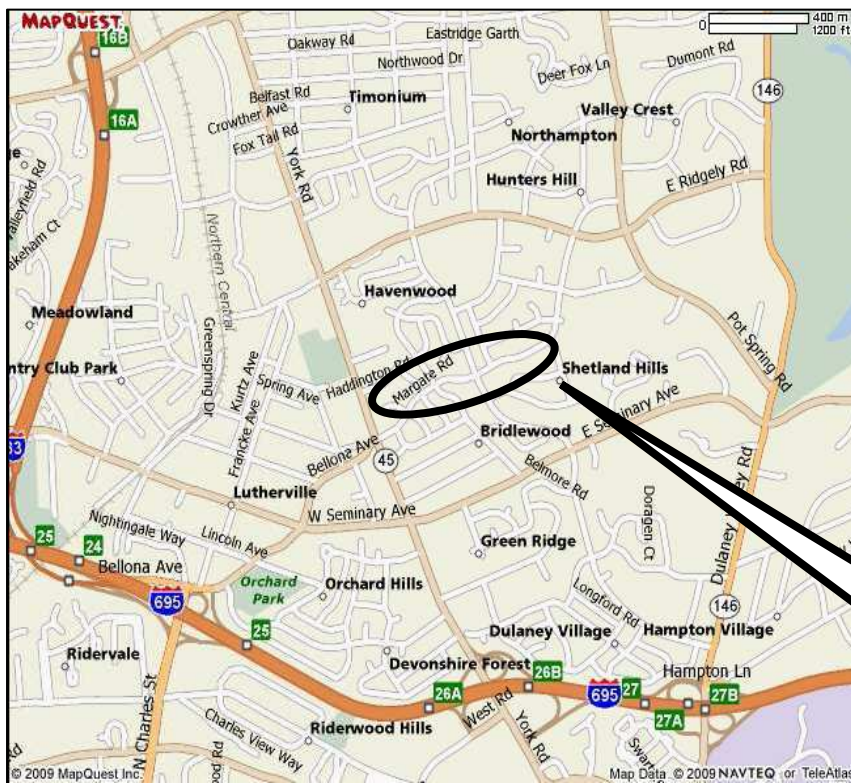
It is important to clean up spilled mercury because of the potential health risks posed by long-term exposure to mercury vapors.

The family who lives in the home will be temporary relocated during cleanup activities.

Work Being Done...

Here are some of the cleanup activities EPA will be doing:

- Testing all areas of the house for mercury, including furniture and clothing
- Removing contaminated materials in sealed bags for storage and monitoring (Items will be either cleaned or removed for proper disposal)
- Removing any visible mercury using special vacuum cleaners that are designed to trap mercury beads and vapors
- Scrubbing floors with special cleaners
- Heating / Ventilating the house to help remove mercury vapors
- Monitoring the air with hand-held meters that detect mercury vapors, to help ensure that the cleanup is working
- Confirming cleanup success with an 8-hour air quality test. (Once the cleanup results are confirmed, the family can reoccupy the house)
- The cleanup is expected to take between 2 – 4 weeks to complete.



General area of residential cleanup

Why the Cleanup Was Needed...

Mercury is a metal that is liquid at room temperature and can roll around as small beads on floors, getting into carpet and the cracks between floorboards. It can also off-gas into mercury vapors.

A person can be exposed to mercury from breathing in contaminated air, from swallowing or eating contaminated water or food, or from having skin contact with mercury.

Possible health effects from mercury vapors include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, increases in blood-pressure or heart rate, skin rashes, and eye irritation. Skin contact with metallic mercury has been shown to cause an allergic reaction (skin rashes) in some people.

The vapors do not pose a safety problem for other homes in the neighborhood or for people walking down the street.

For More Information

visit EPA's website at

www.epa.gov/mercury.html

or

www.epaosc.net/LuthervilleHg

If you have additional questions, Contact:

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What To Do If You Spill Mercury...

Mercury can be found in some common household items such as:

- Fever thermometers,
- Thermostats,
- Blood-pressure gauges, and some
- Cooking thermometers

These tools can contain small amounts of mercury that, if broken, could result in a mercury spill inside the home.

If you find liquid mercury that is not in a sealed container, do not touch it. Call 9-1-1. Be Safe.



Background...

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) contacted EPA after being alerted of the situation by the home owner. A defunct fire detection system located in the resident's basement contained a mercury u-tube that was leaking.

The mercury spill spread throughout the basement and was tracked into some parts of the upper floors of the house.

February 17, 2009, EPA started the cleanup work at the residence.

The cleanup could take about four weeks, pending weather conditions and work schedules.