

**United States Environmental Protection Agency**  
**Region I**  
**POLLUTION REPORT**

**Date:** Tuesday, May 16, 2006  
**From:** Elise Jakabhazy

**Subject:** Initiation of Action  
RI School of Design Mercury Release  
212 Union Street, Providence, RI  
Latitude: 41.8225000  
Longitude: -71.4122000

<b>POLREP No.:</b>	1	<b>Site #:</b>	
<b>Reporting Period:</b>	5/14 to 5/15/06 1730hrs	<b>D.O. #:</b>	
<b>Start Date:</b>	5/14/2006	<b>Response Authority:</b>	CERCLA
<b>Mob Date:</b>	5/14/2006	<b>Response Type:</b>	Emergency
<b>Demob Date:</b>		<b>NPL Status:</b>	Non NPL
<b>Completion Date:</b>		<b>Incident Category:</b>	
<b>CERCLIS ID #:</b>		<b>Contract #</b>	
<b>RCRIS ID #:</b>			

**Site Description**

The Site, located at the corner of Union and Weyboffet Streets, (address 212 Union Street and at Lat. 41° 49' 19" N, Long. 71° 24' 43" W), consists of a 6-story commercial building that houses Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) student studios, classrooms and administrative offices with several tenants on the ground floor. It was originally two separate buildings that have been joined and is located in downtown Providence, RI.

An indoor release of elemental mercury of on a second floor hallway was reported on Sunday May 14, 2006 at 1645 hours; the Providence Fire Department (PFD) was the first responder and secured the site. Initial environmental response was by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), who conducted initial site monitoring with a mercury vapor analyzer and a RISD Environmental Services contractor who cleaned up the free mercury. EPA assistance was requested for additional monitoring assets, which arrived on scene at 2145 hours and commenced air monitoring. The size of the mercury release was estimated at approximately 2" x 2" and ¼" to 1/8" thick for a quantity of approximately 0.25 to 0.5 pounds (the CERCLA reportable quantity is 1 pound). Initial monitoring results after removal of the free mercury indicated mercury vapors widespread throughout the building below occupational levels, but above re-occupancy levels (several 100 to 50,000 ng/cubic meter).

**Current Activities**

The following work has been completed and/or is underway:

May 14, 2006

-The EPA OSC deployed to the response and integrated into the Unified Incident Command of PFD, RIDEM, RISD (and contractor) and EPA.

-Free mercury was cleaned up with a HEPA vacuum cleaner and the spill area was cleaned several times by the RISD contractor.

-EPA deployed 2 Lumex mercury vapor analyzers and 3 START personnel and completed initial air monitoring of the site with RIDEM.

-A building tenant business was monitored and cleared of mercury vapors above background.

-The site was secured by RISD security and personnel demobilized for the night at 0130 hours  
15 May

May 15, 2006

-EPA deployed an additional 2 Lumex mercury vapor analyzers and 2 START personnel.

-Full monitoring of the site was performed, elevated levels of mercury vapor below occupational levels but above re-occupancy levels were detected throughout the building.

-Two retail tenants, one contained within the site building and one adjacent to the site were monitored clear of any mercury vapors above background levels.

-The building was placed on heat and ventilation and secured until the following day.

-Student's shoes and other personal items were monitored for mercury vapor by EPA START personnel and released, decontaminated and released or retained by the RISD contractor.

-The OSC participated in a meeting with RISD, PFD and RIDEM officials regarding site strategy and student/public information/outreach.

-OSC Barry was relieved on-site by OSC Jakabhazy at 1730 hours.

#### **Planned Removal Actions**

- Leave the site on heat and ventilation overnight May 15-16.
- Air Monitor for mercury vapor on May 16 and take further actions pending results.
- As the RISD contractor mobilized more monitoring assets, phase back EPA presence to an oversight role.
- Consult with ERT and other agencies regarding response actions.
- Continue to provide assistance as requested by RIDEM.

#### **Next Steps**

See above

#### **Key Issues**

- Pending air monitoring results, mercury vapor may be difficult to clear from the site.
- Ramp up of sufficient RISP contractor resources to take over lead for the response.
- The release is being investigated as a crime by RISD security and Providence Police and Fire as of now.
- Air monitoring of student's off-site living quarters may become an issue.

[response.epa.gov/RISD](https://response.epa.gov/RISD)