

Hunt Your Home for Mercury...and dispose of it properly.

Mercury is a naturally occurring element and can be found in some household cleaning products and chemicals, older thermometers, some dental supplies, electronics, and more commonly, in fluorescent lightbulbs. It is also very toxic and exposure to it can lead to adverse health effects. Years ago little thought was placed on the health concerns of mercury, but today we are well aware of the dangers.

Products containing mercury should not be disposed of in household trash nor dumped down the sink drain. Most wastewater treatment plants, including the City of Antigo's, do not treat for mercury. It ends up in the bio solids used for nutrient application for livestock crops. Trace amounts of it also end up being discharged back into the environment through the plant's treated water. Throwing mercury away in household trash will end up in landfills where it can contaminate the soil, and risks further exposure to humans and animals.

You might ask yourself, "What can I do to help lessen risk exposure to my family?" The key is proper disposal. As it was mentioned earlier, because of mercury's potential for contamination and toxic exposure no items containing mercury should be disposed of in trash nor down sink drains. Solid waste facilities in your area can provide you with information on how to properly dispose of said items, preventing any exposure to you and your family. You can also call the Langlade County Health Department for more information. Their phone number is (715) 627-6250.

Below are some steps you can take to help keep mercury out of the environment, and more importantly, keep your family safe from its harmful effects.



USE BUT DON'T TRASH ENERGY-EFFICIENT FLUORESCENT BULBS!

Fluorescent lamps contain mercury in a vapor form and the mercury contained in them is emitted into the atmosphere when the lamps are broken, disposed of in landfills, or incinerated. Fluorescent lamps are still a good option as they last longer and cost less to run than incandescent lights which use up to 50 percent more energy. The energy you save helps reduce mercury emissions because small amounts of mercury are present in coal that is burned in power plants. The less energy we use, the less mercury will be released into the environment when coal is burned. Recycling your bulbs is the key to safe disposal. By bringing your bulbs to the "Clean Sweep," held by the Langlade County Land Conservation Department (look for it in August 2020) or contacting the Marathon County Solid Waste Facility in Ringle, you can help keep mercury out of our air, lakes and streams.

YOU CAN RECYCLE MOST BATTERIES

Most normal batteries do not contain mercury. However, the smaller "button cell" batteries that are used in watches, hearing aids, toys, pacemakers, and other devices still contain mercury. If you can find a device containing these small batteries, you've probably found liquid mercury. Depending on the battery, these can contain significant amounts of mercury; total 33 to 50 percent by weight of the battery. For disposal of these batteries in our area, contact the business place you purchased them to see if they have a recycling program. If not, these can be taken to the Marathon County Solid Waste Facility, though there may be a small charge for Langlade County residents.



READ YOUR LABELS BEFORE YOU BUY

As many as 118 products have been identified such as bleach, alcohol, cleansers and detergents which contain low levels of mercury. Know what products they are and their levels of mercury they contain to prevent accumulating mercury-containing items in the home. For disposal of these items, look to the "Clean Sweep" in August 2020.

Resources for our area: Marathon County Solid Waste Facility, 877-270-3989, or www.marathoncountysolidwaste.org

Langlade County Land Conservation Department, 715.627.6292, or <http://www.co.langlade.wi.us/departments/land-conservation/general/hazardous-waste-disposal>

Information included in this pamphlet was obtained from Draft Wisconsin Mercury Sourcebook: Wastewater Plants Mother Nature Network, www.mnn.com