

## **MERCURY ALERT**

Do not use or spread metallic mercury in your home; mercury (Azogue, quicksilver) can be extremely dangerous and can cause you and your children to become very sick.

### **UNSAFE USES OF METALLIC MERCURY (AZOGUE)**

- \* DO NOT burn mercury in candles for good luck (white magic)
- \* DO NOT use mercury for hobbies (for example, heating mercury on a stove to purify gold or silver)
- \* DO NOT sprinkle or spread mercury in the house or car
- \* DO NOT touch mercury, play with mercury, or carry it as a charm
- \* DO NOT swallow mercury as a folk remedy (Azogue) to treat constipation, colic, or stomach ache
- \* DO NOT mix mercury with water or other liquids and use this mixture as a washing solution in the home

### **WHY IS METALLIC MERCURY DANGEROUS?**

Metallic mercury is a very toxic, silver white liquid metal. It stays where spilled for a long time, and evaporates slowly over a long period. Mercury poisoning can cause damage to the nervous system and the brain. In particular, young children, babies, and pregnant women can become very sick if they are exposed to mercury. Mercury vapor is invisible and odorless and requires special equipment for detection.

It may be difficult to know if you suffer from metallic mercury poisoning because there may be no obvious signs. Symptoms to look for include skin rashes, particularly redness and peeling of the hands and feet in children, tremors, muscular weakness, depression, personality changes, and memory loss. Inhaling the highly concentrated mercury vapor created by burning or heating mercury can cause death.

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I'VE USED METALLIC MERCURY IN MY HOME?**

If you have burned, heated, sprinkled, or spilled mercury in your home, you should consult a medical professional as soon as possible to determine if your family has been affected by mercury. In some cases, even small amounts of metallic mercury can cause problems, especially for children. Call your doctor, clinic, local Poison Control Center or local health department for more information on symptoms, proper evaluation and treatment.

If you have burned, heated, sprinkled, or spilled mercury in your home, you may need to clean your house and furniture. A good first

step is to get as much fresh air into the house as possible, although it may take years for all the mercury to evaporate. If pools of mercury are visible, the mercury should be captured and placed in a closed container. If the mercury was spilled on a rug, the rug should be removed and placed in a plastic bag for disposal or special cleaning. Do not try to remove mercury with a vacuum cleaner or other household vacuum appliance. This will only spread mercury in the house and contaminate your appliance. Do not send the rug to the dry cleaners. If mercury was burned in the house, it may be necessary to use a special cleaning agent on all household surfaces, such as walls, furniture, drapes, upholstery, and toys.

If you want a more thorough evaluation of your home, a professional can determine what areas of the house are affected and the level of mercury vapor present. Private testing services are often listed in the yellow pages under "environmental or ecological services." The EPA publication Survey of Indoor Air Quality Diagnostic And Mitigation Firms (#EPA 402-R-93-075) also lists firms in each state. Contact your local sanitation or integrated waste management authorities for information on disposal of rugs or other household furnishings that may contain mercury. It may be illegal to dispose of mercury contaminated articles in the trash. Some states provide hazardous waste disposal services.

**ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION:**

- \* County or state health department (see your phone directory)
- \* local Poison Control Center (see your phone directory)
- \* Environmental Protection Agency's TSCA hotline (202) 554-1404