CONTACT INFORMATION
For more information on the mercury elimination program please contact EHS at 274-2005, or via the web at www.ehs.iupui.edu.

Information for this pamphlet was gathered from the following websites:
www.atsdr.cdc.gov
www.osha.gov

Mercury and Your Work Environment

Department of Environmental Health and Safety
620 Union Drive, Room 043
Indianapolis, IN 46202-5167
Phone (317) 274-2005
Fax (317) 278-2158
www.ehs.iupui.edu
MERCURY
HAZARDS

ELEMENTAL (METALLIC) MERCURY
Elemental mercury is a shiny, silver liquid metal at room temperature. Mercury evaporates at around 70 degrees Fahrenheit, creating colorless, odorless vapors in the air. It is commonly used in devices like glass thermometers and sphygmomanometers. The mercury in these devices does not generally pose a risk unless breakage or damage occurs, and mercury vapors are released.

EXPOSURE AND HEALTH RISKS
The hazards of mercury should not be underestimated. Mercury poisoning can cause permanent damage and even death. The most common route of exposure to mercury in the workplace is through inhalation of vapors. Mercury reaches the bloodstream through the lungs and is distributed to other parts of the body including the kidneys and brain. Due to poor absorption, ingestion or skin contact are less significant routes of exposure for mercury toxicity. Mercury can accumulate and remain in the body for long periods of time.

TOXIC EFFECTS
The nervous system is very sensitive to mercury exposure. Mercury vapors can affect different areas of the brain causing a variety of toxic effects including:

- Headaches
- Vision changes
- Memory problems
- Tremors
- Personality changes
- Insomnia

Mercury also causes effects on the lungs, kidneys, skin and eyes.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF EXPOSURE
Short-term exposure to high levels of mercury vapor can harm the lining of the lungs, causing tightening of the chest, coughing and a burning sensation. Additional symptoms attributed to exposure of mercury vapors include:

- Metallic taste
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever, chills
- Eye irritation

MERCURY ELIMINATION PROGRAM
The IUPUI campus is eliminating all non-essential uses of mercury. This includes mercury compounds and mercury containing devices. All non-essential mercury is to be removed from labs by December 31, 2007. Contact EHS for disposal.

IN CASE OF SPILL
Metallic mercury and its vapors are very difficult to remove from clothes, furniture, carpet, floors, walls, and other similar items. If these items are not properly cleaned, mercury can remain for long periods of time, and continue to be a source of exposure. If a mercury thermometer or sphygmomanometer is damaged or broken, do not try to vacuum up the spill. Leave the room if possible, and avoid stepping in or otherwise contacting the spill. Immediately report all spills to campus police at 274-7911.

Please visit the EHS webpage to review the Mercury Elimination Policy: http://www.ehs.iupui.edu/ehs/chemicalLaboratory_mercuryPolicy.asp.