



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY | HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

## Broken Mercury Thermometers / Bulbs

### Mercury Thermometers

- Floor:
  - If the mercury thermometer breaks on the floor inside a laboratory, laboratory staff need to keep out of the immediate area to avoid spreading the mercury. Contact Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) to initiate a response and get the mercury spill cleaned up.
- Heating Block:
  - If mercury thermometers break inside a heating block at elevated temperatures, evacuate all personnel in the immediate area to prevent potential exposures to mercury vapors and only turn off the heating block if it can be done safely. Contact EHS to initiate a response and get the mercury spill cleaned up.
- Water Bath:
  - A broken mercury thermometer inside a water bath at room temperature does not present a significant inhalation health hazard because the mercury vapor is contained in the water. Bail most of the water out of the water bath and collect the mercury beads into a corner of the bath. Remove the mercury beads with a disposable pipette and collect the mercury beads in a sealed plastic container. Label the mercury beads and dispose of the beads as hazardous waste through EHS.

### High Intensity Mercury (HIM)

- Compact HIM bulbs may release mercury vapors if they break while being used inside electronic equipment. If an HIM bulb breaks while in use, evacuate the immediate area and contact EHS to monitor for mercury vapor concentrations inside the room.

**EHS encourages laboratories to avoid using mercury containing devices if possible.**