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## What Never To Do With a Mercury Spill

- Never use a vacuum cleaner to clean up mercury (but see the "What to Do if a Fluorescent Light Bulb Breaks" section below for more specific instructions about vacuuming broken fluorescent light bulbs). The vacuum will put mercury into the air and increase exposure.
- Never use a broom to clean up mercury. It will break the mercury into smaller droplets and spread them.
- Never pour mercury down a drain. It may lodge in the plumbing and cause future problems during plumbing repairs. If discharged, it can cause pollution of the septic tank or sewage treatment plant.
- Never wash clothing or other items that have come in direct contact with mercury in a washing machine, because mercury may contaminate the machine and/or pollute sewage. Clothing that has come into direct contact with mercury should be discarded. By "direct contact," we mean that mercury was (or has been) spilled directly on the clothing. For example:
  - if you broke a mercury thermometer and some of elemental mercury beads came in contact with your clothing, or
  - if you broke a compact fluorescent bulb (CFL) so that broken glass and other material from the bulb, including mercury-containing powder, came into contact with your clothing.
- You can, however, wash clothing or other materials that have been exposed to the mercury vapor from a broken CFL, like the clothing you happened to be wearing when you cleaned up the broken CFL, as long as that clothing has not come into direct contact with the materials from the broken bulb.
- Never walk around if your shoes might be contaminated with mercury. Contaminated clothing can also spread mercury around.

**For additional guidance, please visit [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)**