

Mercury Reduction

City of Nacogdoches' limit for discharging mercury is 17 parts per trillion! This number is based on the levels of mercury considered to be toxic to human and aquatic life. Mercury in Texas' rivers and lakes is converted by bacteria into a type of mercury that plants and animals can absorb. This is how mercury accumulates in the fish. When humans eat contaminated fish, mercury can hinder brain development and damage to the central nervous system, especially in young children and during adolescence. Elemental mercury is extremely hazardous due to its toxicity, and mercury in other forms may also be designated as hazardous.

Mercury Thermometers Mercury thermometers are easy to break. They can be broken easily by just washing them in the sink. If the 200 grams of mercury from one broken thermometer were to go down the drain, the treatment plant would be affected. In adverse conditions, the plant may even exceed its tight mercury limit.

Mercury in Measuring and Electrical Devices

Metallic mercury is found in electrical switches and relay thermostats, fluorescent tubes, high intensity discharge lamps, and some measuring instruments (barometers, thermometers, blood pressure devices, etc.). These sources rarely affect wastewater, but still should be handled appropriately.

Mercury in Medicines

Mercury also has medicinal uses. It has been found in topical antiseptics (mercurochrome, merthiolate, thimersol, and phenylmercuric nitrate),

disinfectants, diuretics, laxatives (calomel), worming medications, some herb balls for stomach disorders, skin lightening creams (ammoniated mercuric chloride, mercuric iodide), teething powders and as preservatives in eye drops, eye ointments, nasal sprays, and vaccines. While many of these products are no longer sold in drug stores, any of them may still be around the home. It is a good household practice not to flush any drugs down the sink, toilet or shower drain. They need to be wrapped up tightly in plastic bags (especially if children are around) and disposed in the trash. Do not place mercury medications in medical red bags (used for sharp medical paraphernalia) as these are incinerated, transferring mercury easily into the air. Air deposition of Mercury onto land and water accumulates in water bodies and especially sport fish.

Mercury in Paint

Up until 1991, phenylmercuric compounds could be found in both interior and exterior paint. Washing brushes and other equipment in the sink with paint made prior to 1992 could elevate the mercury in the wastewater affecting the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Please dispose of old paint properly.

Dental Amalgams

Dentists in the area are working hard to keep heavy metals out of the sewers. Many dentists are using more modern materials, eliminating amalgam waste. Ask your dentist office about its use of mercury.