

# Play It Safe Around Mercury



## Thomasville Utilities

Mercury is a metal, the only one that is liquid at room temperature. This silvery liquid metal is very dense, yet has a high surface tension that causes it to form tiny perfect spheres in the pores of the rocks in which it is found. It is an element that does not break down.

Mercury occurs naturally in the environment in very small amounts in oceans, rocks and soil. Less than a third of the mercury in the environment occurs naturally. The majority of mercury pollution that enters the air, lakes and streams is preventable.

You can prevent and reduce the man-made sources of mercury pollution by purchasing mercury-free or low mercury products, choosing long lasting products to reduce waste and properly disposing of products that contain mercury.

Learn to identify mercury-containing products around your home! Below is a list of some common household items that contain mercury:

### Batteries

- Old alkaline batteries (prior to 1998)
- Flat “button” batteries



### Measuring Devices

- Thermometers
- Gas meters
- Mercury switches
- Barometers
- Pressure gauges
- Thermostats
- Hydrometers
- Vacuum gauges

### Lighting

- Fluorescent lamps
- High-pressure sodium lamps
- Mercury vapor lamps
- Metal halide lamps
- Strobe lights
- Neon lamps



### Historical Uses and Novelty Items

- Latex paint, pre-1991
- Some oil-based paints and pigments
- Pesticides/Fungicides
- Some children’s light-up tennis shoes



Listed below are some mercury free alternatives to items you may have around your home.

Mercury-containing products	Mercury free alternatives
Thermometer	Digital thermometers
Thermostats	Electronic models
Novelty products such as tennis shoes, toys or cards that light up, watches and calculators	Think twice before buying novelty items. They may end up in the landfill where mercury can potentially get into drinking water
Old alkaline batteries, button batteries (these are often hidden in greeting cards, watches, toys and calculators)	Use rechargeable batteries or purchase items that don’t need batteries
Silver dental amalgam	Ask your dentist about mercury free alternatives