

Mercury Thermometer Exchange Frequently Asked Questions

Mercury-Free Thermometers

Q: Where can I get a registration form to receive free thermometers and/or request free disposal?

A: Forms are available at the following link: ehs.berkeley.edu/mercuryfree.html. Return completed forms to your Department Safety Coordinator by April 23, 2003. Do **not** send forms to EH&S.

Q: How do I know who my Department Safety Coordinator is?

A: Call EH&S at 642-3073.

Q: Should I give my thermometers to my DSC?

A: No. EH&S will contact the person listed on the registration form to schedule the exchange and pick up of unwanted mercury-containing devices and chemicals.

Q: I have 75 mercury thermometers. How many mercury-free thermometers may I receive?

A: This is a one-for-one exchange. You may receive up to 75 free thermometers but please only request as many as you need.

Q: May I receive free thermometers if I disposed of my mercury thermometers last year?

A: No, but you may order them directly by calling ERTCO at 1-800-453-7826 (Paul Stinson).

Q: What kind of thermometers are you giving away? Are they accurate?

A: ERTCO EverSafe Laboratory Thermometers. There are two ranges from which to choose:
-20°C to 150°C
-10°C to 260°C

Mercury and non-mercury thermometers used in general purpose laboratory applications are comparable in accuracy, and both are calibrated and tested against applicable national standards.

Q: Why should I replace my mercury thermometers?

A: Mercury spills from broken thermometers are the most common type of hazardous material clean up on campus. Spills consume valuable staff time and other resources to properly clean up and dispose of the mercury debris. In addition, mercury that inadvertently spills down sinks could result in violations of our wastewater permit from EBMUD, and could ultimately contribute to pollution in the San Francisco Bay.

Q: I live in a UC campus dorm. Will you exchange my personal fever thermometer?

A: Free disposal can be arranged through the Housing and Dining Safety Coordinator, Bill Crowel (643-6074). However, we are only giving away free laboratory-type thermometers at this time; no free fever thermometers are currently available.

Mercury Disposal

Q: How do I sign up for free disposal only?

A: The same registration form is to be used to sign up for both the thermometer exchange and free disposal. Complete the backside of the form and list all the unwanted mercury that you would like to have disposed. We will call the room contact to arrange the pick up in May.

Q: After the thermometer exchange, may I still dispose of unwanted mercury for free?

A: Please register for free mercury disposal by the April 23 deadline. After the May thermometer exchange, if there are funds remaining, we will cover the cost of disposal for any mercury-containing items that are replaced with non-mercury devices in your lab.

Q: I recently broke a thermometer and still have the pieces in a plastic bag. May I exchange it for a free thermometer?

A: No. In addition, broken thermometers and spill residues are not eligible for the free disposal.

Q: When will I know you are coming to my lab/shop to pick up my mercury/replace my thermometers?

A: We will call the lab or shop contact listed on the registration form in advance to schedule the pick up of unwanted mercury and drop off of any thermometers.

Exchange/Disposal of Other Mercury-Containing Devices

Q: I have a mercury barometer and want a mercury-free replacement. How do I sign up?

A: The same registration form should be used to request the disposal and replacement of other mercury devices. Funds remaining after the thermometer exchange will be allocated on a case-by-case basis. Since free replacement is **not** guaranteed, do not dispose of any needed devices until you are certain that funds are available for their replacement (we will call you in June). Forms are available at the following link: ehs.berkeley.edu/mercuryfree.html. Return completed forms to your Department Safety Coordinator by April 23, 2003.

Q: Can I sign up to receive free replacement of my mercury-containing compounds?

A: No – we are only replacing mercury-containing devices. But you may dispose of mercury-containing compounds for free during May if you register by April 23.

Special Requests/Miscellaneous

Q: Will someone come to my shop to disassemble my mercury thermostat so we can get free disposal in May?

A: If you have mercury-containing equipment that must be dismantled, please indicate that on the registration form and submit your request by April 23. It will be considered a special request (on a case-by-case basis) and reviewed **after** the completion of the thermometer exchange in May.

Q: May we request other types of thermometers besides the ones you are offering?

A: Indicate on the registration form (or include an attachment) of the type of thermometer you would like to receive. Please be as specific as possible. Special requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis after the regular thermometer exchange in May.

Q: How does the University have money to offer free thermometers?

A: The UC Berkeley Office of Environment, Health and Safety and the East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD) received a pollution prevention grant from the US EPA to help reduce the amount of mercury on campus and educate the campus about the hazards of mercury.