The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Department of Environment, Health & Safety
1120 Estes Drive Ext., CB# 1650
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599

MERCURY-FREE UNC POLICY

Effective March 27, 2009

Purpose:
Mercury pollution is one of the most significant environmental toxins found in the United States. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a variety of public health organizations have identified mercury elimination as one of their highest priorities in recent years. Currently at UNC Chapel Hill, elemental mercury is the most commonly spilled chemical on campus. Over an eight year period, roughly seventy percent of chemical spill response/clean-up has involved mercury. As a result, a significant amount of resources is expended each year by University personnel in the remediation of mercury spills. In addition, improper disposal and/or unrecognized or unreported releases of mercury are a threat to the community and can lead to significant regulatory consequences for the University. As a generator of hazardous chemical waste, UNC Chapel Hill has an obligation under federal and state regulations and to the community to reduce the volume and quantity of mercury generated on campus. The University recognizes the threat presented by mercury and is committed to the reduction/elimination of mercury on campus.

Scope:
Principal Investigators and laboratory Safety Supervisors are responsible for identifying mercury containing devices in their laboratory that should be eliminated. Departments are responsible for providing sufficient resources to provide alternatives and implement reduction/elimination of mercury from departmental laboratories. The Department of Environment, Health and Safety is responsible for properly disposing of mercury waste from laboratories and educating the campus about alternatives.

Policy:
All non-essential uses of elemental mercury are to be eliminated from campus laboratories by December 31, 2009. Essential use is defined as: a circumstance where no acceptable alternative for the current use can be located or where it is found that implementation of an alternative would create a significant long-term financial hardship to the department or research project. Laboratories wishing to maintain inventories of mercury can request an exception *via* the Department of Environment, Health and Safety. In the event of a disagreement over the requested exception, the Laboratory and Chemical Safety Committee will be asked to review and make a decision regarding the request. The Department of Environment, Health and Safety will work in a cooperative fashion with any department found to have an unusually large inventory of mercury-based items to allow phase-ins of alternatives. Examples of laboratory devices that contain elemental mercury include but are not limited to: thermometers, barometers, and manometers. Mercury waste being eliminated should be referred to the UNC Chapel Hill Department of Environment, Health and Safety for proper disposal (~~https://itsapps.unc.edu/HazMat_Pickup/~~).

Noncompliance:
The Department of Environment, Health and Safety will begin citing mercury reduction/elimination non-compliance during Collaborative Laboratory Inspection Program (CLIP) inspections in 2010.

Program Oversight:
The Department of Environment, Health and Safety and the Laboratory and Chemical Safety Committee will serve as technical resources for the implementation of this program. The Department of Environment, Health and Safety will also serve to oversee the development and implementation of mercury educational materials with the help of the Office of Sustainability.