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News Release

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DEQ to Hold Household Mercury Collection Event in Bartlesville

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is conducting a free Household Mercury Collection Event on November 14-15, 2014, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. in Bartlesville at the Central Fire House, 601 S. Johnstone. Citizens of Bartlesville and the surrounding area can bring liquid mercury or mercury-containing devices such as thermometers, thermostats or switches to the collection site. Fluorescent light bulbs will not be accepted as those can be taken to many home stores for recycling. No questions will be asked about the origins of the mercury. The mercury will be transported to a recycling facility.

When bringing mercury or mercury-containing devices to the event, place containers of liquid mercury in a zipper-lock plastic bag to protect from an accidental spill. Mercury-containing devices should be secured to prevent breakage.

Exposure to mercury can cause serious health effects. It can permanently damage the brain, lungs, kidneys, and developing fetuses. Acute exposure to high levels of mercury vapor can cause respiratory failure and death. A common and dangerous route to mercury exposure occurs when it is spilled in the home, especially if it is spilled into carpet or other porous material. Mercury slowly vaporizes at room temperature, and the vapors are extremely toxic to humans when inhaled. Mercury vapors are odorless, colorless and heavier than air and therefore tend to hover near the floor. Children are especially vulnerable to mercury poisoning because they tend to play on or near the floor.

For years, mercury was used in thermometers, barometers, thermostats, gas meters, fluorescent lights, and many other household products. The use of mercury in consumer products is being phased out, but many of these items are still in use today.

For more information on Bartlesville's Household Mercury Collection Event, contact Monty Elder at (405) 702-9132 or by email at monty.elder@deq.ok.gov.

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