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News Release

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Mercury Collection Event Scheduled in Sapulpa

A mercury spill can poison people and devastate property. Sapulpa area residents will have a chance to safely get rid of any mercury or mercury containing devices for free. The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will accept mercury from the public on August 29 through September 2 from 8 am to 7 pm at Sapulpa's Central Fire House, located at 800 East Dewey. People can bring liquid mercury and old devices, such as thermometers, thermostats, and switches. Fluorescent lamps **will not** be accepted. Place containers of liquid mercury in sealed plastic bags to prevent accidental spills that can contaminate a car.

The collection event was triggered by a case of mercury poisoning in Sapulpa this summer. A homeowner spilled several tablespoons, became ill, and was diagnosed with mercury poisoning. DEQ tested the house and found such high levels in the air that it requested immediate assistance from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA moved the residents to a motel and is currently cleaning up the house.

Liquid mercury vaporizes at room temperature making the air unsafe to breathe, especially for children playing on the floor. It is absorbed by porous materials such as carpet, wood, flooring, and walls. Attempts to vacuum it only spread the contamination.

Mercury poisoning can permanently damage the brain, lungs, kidneys, and developing fetuses. Exposure to high levels can cause respiratory failure and death.

Many people have containers of liquid mercury as a curiosity, unaware of its health threat. It was also used in thermometers, barometers, thermostats, gas meters, batteries, and paint. Those uses have been phased out, but it is still used in fluorescent lamps.

Residents who miss the Sapulpa collection event can safely get rid of liquid mercury or mercury products at the Tulsa Household Pollutant Collection Facility (cityoftulsa.org), or at collection events sponsored by the Metropolitan Environmental Trust (metrecycle.com). For opportunities to recycle fluorescent bulbs see metrecycle.com. For opportunities to recycle mercury thermostats see thermostat-recycle.org.

For more information, contact Fenton Rood with DEQ at (405) 702-5100 or fenton.rood@deq.ok.gov.

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