

# News Release



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## ***Hazardous Materials Awareness Week 2012***

Santa Rosa County is recognizing “Hazardous Materials Awareness Week” Jan. 22-28 with a focus on “mercury awareness and education.” Emergency management and environment department hope to increase the community’s knowledge of hazardous mercury emissions and how to properly dispose of common household items containing the chemical.

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that is found in air, water and soil. Mercury can be found in common household items including thermostats, barometers, fluorescent tubes, CFL light bulbs, batteries, major appliances, dental fillings, neon signs, pharmaceuticals and pesticides. Items containing mercury should never be disposed of in your household garbage or directly in the landfill. The mercury in many items can be recycled and reused if disposed of properly.

To safely dispose of household items containing mercury, visit Santa Rosa County’s Hazardous Household Waste Center located at the entrance of the Central Landfill 6337 Da Lisa Road in Milton. This service is provided Monday through Saturday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is free of charge. If you have a small spill, for instance one broken thermometer, do not vacuum up the spilled mercury. Vacuuming turns the liquid mercury into a vapor which can increase your exposure. Pick up the mercury beads with masking tape or a medicine dropper, store the beads in a sealed plastic container, and dispose of properly.

When items containing mercury are improperly disposed of, mercury can enter bodies of water and impact area wildlife, particularly fish. According to the Santa County Department of Health, if a contaminated fish is eaten by a human, the mercury in the fish is absorbed into the body. While elemental mercury is eliminated from our bodies, frequent meals of contaminated fish may cause unsafe levels of mercury in humans. Cleaning, trimming or cooking fish will not reduce the amount of mercury.

Citizens can help reduce mercury waste by:

- Buying non-mercury alternatives such as alkaline batteries.
- Many retail outlets collect batteries and CFL’s for safe disposal. Search online by zip code for a location near year at [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com) or utilize the Santa Rosa County’s Hazardous Household Waste Center.
- Do not throw away paints, mercury switches, thermometers, blood pressure cuffs, fluorescent tubes and other items containing mercury in the trash. Please take them to the Santa Rosa County’s Hazardous Household Waste Center.
- It is not uncommon for items we use in daily life to contain mercury. For example, some irons with automatic shut-off switches and some older styles of athletic shoes with flashing red lights may contain mercury. Always check items prior to purchasing and seek mercury-free alternatives.

For information from the CDC and Florida Department of Health on how to prevent and avoid exposure from mercury spills, visit the “What’s Hot” section of [www.santarosa.fl.gov/emergency](http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/emergency). To learn more about disposing of mercury products or other household hazardous waste, contact the Santa Rosa County Environmental Department at (850) 981-7135.

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