



WHITMAN

Environmental · Engineering · Energy · EH&S Compliance · Waste Management

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Is There Mercury in Your Gym Floor?

What is Mercury?

Mercury is a toxic chemical element that was once known for being used in thermometers, fluorescent light bulbs and dental amalgams. The United States Clean Air Act, passed in 1990, put mercury on a list of toxic pollutants that need to be controlled to the greatest possible extent.

Mercury is a poison and is **not** considered a cancer risk. Mercury can be inhaled as a vapor, and liquid mercury can be absorbed through the skin. Mercury can cause both chronic and acute poisoning.

How Did Mercury Get in the Gym Floors?

From the 1960s to the mid-1990s, schools and other facilities installed polyurethane (rubberized) flooring in indoor gymnasiums, cafeterias and outdoor running tracks and field houses. Some manufacturers' formulations contained phenyl-mercuric-acetate (PMA) as a catalyst; floors with the catalyst can emit elemental mercury vapors.

Are Mercury Vapors a Health Concern?

They can be. The inhalation of mercury vapor can produce harmful effects on the nervous, digestive and immune systems, lungs and kidneys. The impact on a person's health depends on several factors, including:

- ✓ Mercury exposure levels
- ✓ Length of exposure
- ✓ Age (young children are more vulnerable)
- ✓ Route of exposure
- ✓ Current state of health



We Have a Polyurethane Floor ... What Do We Do Next?

1. Contact Whitman. We have worked with several school districts to help identify and address this specific issue. Our experienced Environmental Professionals are available to address your health questions and concerns.
2. Whitman can conduct bulk testing to determine if mercury is present. If results are below 1 ppm, then no further action is needed. If the results are positive, Whitman can conduct mercury vapor screening to determine airborne mercury levels.
3. Based upon the testing results, Whitman can develop a management plan to help ensure that airborne mercury vapor exposure levels remain below recommended limits. Whitman can also offer advice on long term planning: manage the mercury in place or remediate.

For more information regarding these services, please contact:

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