

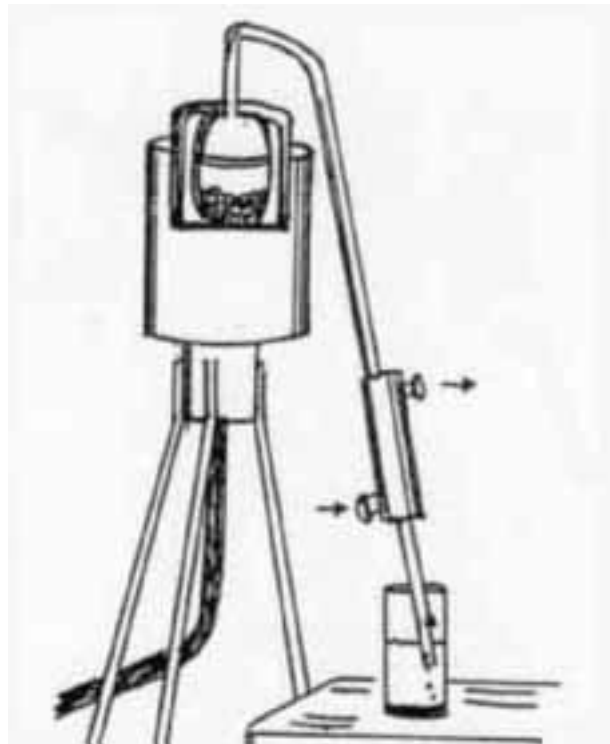
Mercury Vapour Harmful

Several incidents of mercury poisoning in placer miners have occurred because of refining in closed or poorly ventilated areas. In one situation the miners did not know there had been large spills in the ground in the past and were refining flours and fines in their cabin.

Mercury is a highly toxic material that affects the nervous system and kidneys. It takes a long time for the body to eliminate mercury and for that reason the level in the body can build up to where symptoms of temporary and permanent damage may occur. Symptoms are easily confused with other diseases and problems. Some of these symptoms are: fine tremors, taste or smell changes, emotional disturbances, lack of concentration, headache, fatigue and weakness. It is important to have a physician perform testing.

The main route of entry is inhalation of the vapour which comes off liquid mercury. Liquid mercury produces invisible vapour even at room temperature. A small amount of mercury can also be absorbed through the skin.

Do not breathe the vapour and protect your hands when you are using mercury or suspect it is in your ground. Spills in an unventilated room should be treated very seriously as the mercury in tiny cracks will continue to vaporize until the air is saturated. At this level the air in the room would be extremely harmful over a period of time.



Spills on the ground may affect your water or the downstream water supply for a very long period of time. Mercury accumulates in fish, plants and animals and this may consequently affect anything or anyone who consumes them.

Recommendations:

- Suspect mercury contamination in any areas hand mined pre-1925.
- Retort with a condenser and collect all the mercury you are using or find in your gold.
- Keep the mercury in sealed polyethylene bottles or the original container.
- Obtain a spill kit from a safety supply dealer.
- Ventilate all areas where workers may be exposed to mercury vapour.
- See your doctor within 15 days of accidental exposure or if you have any symptoms;
- Have your drinking water tested regularly to ensure there is no contamination.

Occupational Health & Safety
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