

Disposal of Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs



Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs are revolutionizing the way we light our homes and manage our electricity usage. They use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer. If every American home replaced just one incandescent light bulb with an ENERGY STAR® CFL, every year we would save enough energy to light more than three million homes and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars.

Although the benefits of CFLs are great, we must also be mindful that CFLs contain a small amount of mercury and should be disposed of properly, according to local, state and federal laws. There is an average of five milligrams of mercury sealed within the glass tubing of a CFL bulb. This amount would about cover the tip of a ballpoint pen. By comparison, a mercury thermometer contains between 500 and 1,000 milligrams of mercury.

According to the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), no adverse health effects are expected from occasional exposure to broken lamps.

What precautions should I take when using CFLs in my home?

CFLs are made of glass and can break if dropped or handled roughly. Be careful when removing the bulb from its packaging, installing the bulb or replacing it. Always twist the bulb by its base, not by the glass, and never forcefully twist the CFL into a light socket.

How should I clean up a broken fluorescent bulb?

1. Because there is such a small amount of mercury in CFLs, your greatest risk if a bulb breaks is getting cut from shards of glass.
2. If weather permits, open windows to allow the room to ventilate.
3. Sweep up – don't vacuum – all of the glass fragments and fine particles.
4. Place broken pieces of the bulb in a sealed plastic bag and wipe the area with a damp paper towel to pick up any stray shards of glass or fine particles. Put the used towel in the plastic bag, as well.
5. You may dispose of CFL bulbs and tubes in your normal household trash.
6. Wash your hands after disposing of the bag.

Do not dispose of CFLs in an incinerator.

What should I do with a burned out CFL?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that consumers take advantage of available local recycling options for CFL bulbs. The organization is working with CFL manufacturers and major U.S. retailers to expand recycling and disposal options. Consumers can contact their local municipal solid waste agency directly, or visit one of the following Web sites to identify local recycling options:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:

www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling

Lamp Recycle.org :

www.lamprecycle.org

Earth 911:

www.earth911.org



ENERGY STAR qualified CFLs come with a warranty. If the bulb fails within the warranty period return it to your retailer.

