



LIGHTING FACT SHEET

WHAT TO DO IF A CFL BREAKS

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) use up to 75 percent less energy and can last 10 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs.

Although CFLs contain only a small amount of mercury, it's best for the environment and for the health and safety of yourself and others to properly clean up after a broken CFL. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends the steps at right to safely dispose of the debris.

FOR LOCAL INFORMATION ON RECYCLING LIGHT BULBS

Check with your local county recycling program to see if there are local restrictions for light bulb disposal. Some municipalities require fluorescent bulbs (broken or unbroken) be taken to a local recycling center. If there is no such requirement in your area, you can dispose of the materials with your household trash. Otherwise, dispose of the materials at your local recycling center.

CFLS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The growing popularity of CFLs has prompted some to question the bulbs' mercury content and its effect on the environment. Like all fluorescent lamps, CFLs contain small amounts of mercury – an average of five milligrams of mercury per bulb. By comparison, some watch batteries contain 25 mg of mercury, and many thermostats contain up to 3,000 mg.

RECOMMENDED STEPS

- 1 Have people and pets leave the room.
- 2 Open nearby windows for 5-10 minutes to disperse any vapor that may escape and shut off the central heat/air conditioning system, if you have one.
- 3 Carefully sweep up the glass fragments using stiff paper or cardboard (do not use a vacuum or broom), and place them in a lidded jar or sealed plastic bag.
- 4 Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small pieces and powder. Wipe the area with damp paper towels. Place the towels in the sealed bag.
- 5 If vacuuming is needed after visible materials are removed, vacuum the area where the bulb was broken. Remove the vacuum bag (or empty and wipe the canister) and put the bag or vacuum debris in a sealed plastic bag.
- 6 Promptly place all bulb debris and cleanup materials outdoors until the materials can be disposed of properly.
- 7 Continue to air out the room where the bulb was broken for several hours, leaving the heating and air conditioning system off.

CFLs are perfectly safe to use; they do not emit mercury when they are intact, in use, properly stored, handled, or installed. And because CFLs use less electricity, they are actually responsible for fewer mercury emissions than traditional incandescent bulbs. A power plant will emit more mercury producing the electricity to light an incandescent bulb than to run a CFL for the same length of time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out how you can reduce energy costs and improve the comfort, safety, and durability of your home, call Focus on Energy at **800.762.7077** or visit focusonenergy.com/residential.

Environmental Protection Agency
epa.gov/bulbrecycling

Wisconsin DNR
dnr.wi.gov/topic/Recycling/bulbs.html

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Focus on Energy, Wisconsin utilities' statewide program for energy efficiency and renewable energy, helps eligible residents and businesses save energy and money while protecting the environment. Focus on Energy information, resources and financial incentives help to implement energy efficiency and renewable energy projects that otherwise would not be completed.

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