

Proper Disposal of Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs)

What is Mercury?

- Mercury is a substance naturally found in the environment
- In its elemental form, Mercury is a shiny, silver-white liquid metal
- Mercury can evaporate to form colorless, odorless mercury vapors

How is it harmful?

- Exposure to high levels of mercury can permanently damage the brain causing personality changes and vision, hearing and memory problems
- Short term exposure to mercury vapors may cause lung damage, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, high blood pressure, skin rashes and eye irritation
- Very young children are more sensitive than adults and may develop problems of their nervous and digestive systems and kidney damage
- Pregnant mothers who consume contaminated fish may harm their babies

Where can Mercury be found in the home?

- Non-digital thermometers and air conditioning thermostats
- Blood pressure measuring equipment and some electric switches
- Fluorescent lights like mercury vapor and high pressure sodium lamps
- Some neon lights and Compact Fluorescent Light (CFLs)

What are Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs)?

- Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs) are small fluorescent light bulbs that can be screwed into a regular light socket
- CFLs contain a very small amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing-an average of 4 milligrams – about the amount that would cover the tip of a ballpoint pen

Benefits of using CFLs

- EPA Energy Star qualified CFLs use up to 75% less electricity than comparable incandescent light bulbs and can last up to 10 times longer
- Electricity use is the main source of mercury emissions in the U.S. By using less electricity than incandescent lights, CFLs can help reduce the amount of mercury in the environment.

Safe Disposal Locations

- All Home Depot Stores
Bring expired unbroken CFL bulbs in a sealed plastic bag and deposit in a CFL collection box located near the entrance or exit inside the store
- Miami-Dade County Permanent Home Chemical Collection Centers
West Dade: 8831 NW 58th Street
South Dade: 23707 SW 97th Avenue, Gate-B
- Broward County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Centers
Main: 2780 N. Powerline Rd, Pompano Beach
Central: 5490 Reese Rd, Davie
South: 5601 W. Hallandale Beach Blvd, West Park
- Monroe County Transfer and Recycle Centers
Key Largo: 200 Magnolia Street, Mile Marker 100.2, Key Largo
Long Key: Mile Marker 68, Long Key
Cudjoe Key: Blimp Rd, Mile Marker 21.5, Summerland Key

How to clean up a broken CFL

- Never use a vacuum cleaner or broom!
- Evacuate the room for 15 minutes or more and shut off the central A/C
- Place a pedestal or floor fan in front of an open window to blow air out
- Wear disposable gloves
- Carefully pick up glass fragments using stiff paper or cardboard
- Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up remaining small glass fragments and powder
- Wipe the area clean with wet paper towels or disposable wet wipes
- Place all materials in double sealed plastic bags and wash hands
- Take plastic bags to a county recycling center

Additional Information and Resources

- State Emergency Response Commission (SERC)
<http://www.floridadisaster.org/cps/serc/news.htm>
- Earth911 (one stop shop for recycling and reusing your trash)
<http://earth911.org/hazardous/cfl/>
- WSVN-TV Special Investigative Report "Light Fright"
<http://www4.wsvn.com/features/articles/investigations/Mi104181/>
- Green Living (Climate Change, Mercury, Recycling)
<http://wn.wsvn.com/Global/category.asp?C=92036>
- USEPA Mercury Bulb Recycling Resources
<http://www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling/>