

Fluorescent Safety Facts

**Never Put a Burnt Out Compact or Regular Fluorescent Lamp in the Trash:
RETURN THEM TO THE RETAIL STORE THAT CARRIES THAT BULB**

Special care should be taken with the disposal of all burnt out or broken fluorescent lights. This has become a particularly important issue in light of the growing popularity of those spiral-shaped bulbs which are called compact fluorescent lamps or CFLs. While these CFLs have been around for over 20 years, this increased popularity is due to the fact that they not only last much longer than standard incandescent light bulbs, but are much more energy efficient—a particularly important consideration given the rising cost of energy and ever-increasing concerns about carbon emissions.

Concerns

- **COST:** They do cost more than standard bulbs, although this difference is quickly made up by longer bulb life, lower electric bills, and rebates.
- **SAFETY:** All fluorescents including CFLs contain very small amounts of mercury, and mercury is a dangerous substance if you are exposed to it in the home, workplace or environment.

BUT these concerns only become a safety problem if:

- » The CFL bulb or other fluorescent light breaks.
- » A burnt out CFL bulb or other fluorescent light is improperly disposed of.

What to do with a Burnt Out CFL?

CFL's may last longer than incandescent bulbs, but when they burn out, they require special recycling.

DO NOT place the bulbs in the trash or in your curbside recycling bin. Some CFLs are fragile and breakage would release their mercury which would contaminate the trucks, your other recyclables and the workers who handle them!

The only safe way to dispose of a CFL or any other fluorescent is to bring it to a retail store that sells the type of bulb you wish to recycle.

Some stores charge a small recycling fee and others do not. The expense and inconvenience is a small price to pay for saving energy, money and protecting our environment.

What Do I Do if a CFL Bulb Breaks in my House?

Don't panic. The bulbs contain a relatively small amount of mercury and there are safe clean-up methods. Here are some simple steps:

- **OPEN THE WINDOWS BEFORE BEGINNING CLEAN-UP.**
- Leave the area for 15 minutes. This ventilation will significantly lower the level of mercury vapor in the area.
- Keep people and pets out of the area until the clean-up is complete.
- Wear rubber gloves to protect your hands from sharp glass, mercury and the phosphor powder.
- Carefully remove the larger pieces and place them in a double heavy duty plastic 1-gallon re-sealable bag (Ziplock®, Gladlock® etc.) and then in a glass jar with a sealable lid.
- Scoop up the smaller pieces and powder using two stiff pieces of paper (like index or playing cards).
- Pat the area with the sticky side of duct tape to pick up the fine particles.
- Wipe the area with a damp paper towel.
- Carefully dispose of the tape and towels in the same container used for the broken bulb.
- Tightly seal the container and remove it from your home until you can properly recycle it.
- Continue ventilating the room for several hours.
- Carefully wash your hands and face.
- Take the properly packaged broken CFL to the Dane County Clean Sweep Site.



Dane County Clean Sweep
2302 Fish Hatchery Road
Madison, WI 53713

Clean Sweep is open May through October on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. During the winter months when Clean Sweep is closed, please store these materials in a safe place (like a garage) until the facility opens in May. Visit www.danecountycleansweep.com for details.

~ DO NOT USE A VACUUM CLEANER FOR THE INITIAL CLEAN-UP ~

A vacuum cleaner will spread the mercury vapor and powder throughout the area and could contaminate the vacuum.

After the initial clean-up, it is a good idea to open a window the next few times when you vacuum the area where the lamp was broken.

What about Carpets?

Follow the same procedure as above. If you are concerned that you weren't able to clean-up all of the powder and glass from your carpet or rug, you may want to consider removing throw rugs or the area of carpet where the breakage occurred. This may be a sensible precaution particularly if the rug is in an area used by infants, small children or pregnant women. The rugs can be disposed of with your normal household refuse. **DO NOT BURN THIS CARPETING.**