

Fluorescent Lamp Recycling Programme FAQ

FAQ

1. How much mercury is contained inside a CFL or fluorescent lamp?

Fluorescent lamps contain small amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing. For example, an average compact fluorescent lamp contains about 4 milligrams of mercury or less, which is only 1/100th of the amount of mercury found in a mercury thermometer. Fluorescent lamps may contain up to 15 milligrams, depending on the type, brand and date of manufacture. Many lamp suppliers have reduced the amount of mercury in their lamps over the past 20 years.

2. What are the health effects of mercury exposure?

When a fluorescent lamp is broken, the health risk is minimal since the mercury content of the lamp is small. Broken lamps should be handled properly (see [Question 3](#)).

3. What should I do if a fluorescent lamp breaks in my house?

While fluorescent lamps contain a very small amount of mercury, and care should be taken when they break. The following precautionary measures are recommended for cleaning up broken lamps:

- a. Do not use ordinary residential and commercial floor vacuums, floor vacuums that trap dirt with water, or wet/dry shop vacuums. (For vacuum cleaning, only vacuums designed specifically for hazardous waste may be used.)
- b. Instead of vacuum cleaning, wear latex gloves and carefully clean up the fragments. Wipe the area with a damp disposable paper towel to remove all glass fragments and mercury drops.
- c. Keep all people and pets away from the area so that mercury-containing pieces and powder are not tracked into other areas.
- d. Keep the area well ventilated to disperse any vapor that may escape.
- e. After the clean up is complete, place all fragments along with cleaning materials into a sealable plastic bag. Wash your hands.

* Source - California Integrated Waste Management Board

4. What should I do if I break a fluorescent lamp when I put it in the collection box?

Provided that it is properly wrapped with the lamp packing, fluorescent lamp seldom breaks when it is put in the collection box. In case a fluorescent lamp breaks when you put it in the collection box, please close the cover of the collection box, inform the counter staff of the collection point immediately, and wash your hands. The staff will seal the plastic bag inside the collection box to prevent leakage, and remove the bag for proper disposal.

5. What are the advantages of using a compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) or other fluorescent lamps?

CFLs and other fluorescent lamps may cost more up front, but they save money in the long run. CFLs in particular require less than a quarter of the energy needed to provide the same amount of light from ordinary incandescent bulb, and they last up to 10 times longer. Their energy efficiency helps to reduce greenhouse gases released from coal-burning power plants. They also give off less heat, which can help in hot summer months. The public is encouraged to use CFLs and to recycle mercury-containing lamps after use.

6. What happens to CFLs and other fluorescent lamps when they are recycled?

Fluorescent lamps are made of metal, glass, mercury and phosphor powder. The Chemical Waste Treatment Centre has a treatment facility designed to separate the mercury for recycling, while other components are treated before disposal.