



# E-Conservation

power to control what you spend

## Disposing of compact fluorescent bulbs is safe and easy

Energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) are increasingly available and popular. Using a bulb that requires less energy not only saves power, but saves money on utility bills. Additionally, lessening the power required means reducing the amount of greenhouse gases emitted, promoting a cleaner environment. Compact fluorescent lights do last longer than their incandescent counterparts, but at some point they may burn out or break. Because the bulbs contain a very small amount of mercury (about the size of a pinhead) encased in glass tubing, it is important to dispose of them correctly.

Recycling is the best way to dispose of any unbroken fluorescent bulb, compact or otherwise. Careful recycling ensures that no mercury is released into the air and that glass, metal and other manufacturing materials may be reused. Many city or county household hazardous waste (HHW) programs will accept fluorescent light bulbs, including CFLs, for recycling. IKEA stores will also recycle compact fluorescent bulbs, and mail-in recycling is available through the RecyclePak program, [www.sylvania.com/Recycle/RecyclePak/](http://www.sylvania.com/Recycle/RecyclePak/).

In some areas, HHW collection is on-going, but in other areas the collection is done only once or twice a year. HHW collection and recycling are free in many areas, but some may charge a small fee. The search feature on the web site [earth911.org](http://earth911.org) will help you find a compact fluorescent bulb-recycling site near your home.

If a fluorescent or compact fluorescent bulb breaks, use the following steps to ensure a safe and complete clean-up of the spill.

- Ventilate the room. Have people and pets leave the room. Make sure they do not walk through the spill while leaving. Open a window. Shut off the central air conditioning or heating system (forced air).
- Do not use a vacuum or broom to clean up the spill. Vacuums and brooms break the mercury into smaller droplets and disperse them into the air.
- Carefully scoop up glass fragments and powder with a piece of cardboard. Place them in a sealed glass jar or plastic bag.
- On a hard surface, wipe the area clean with a damp paper towel or wet wipe. On carpet, vacuum the area after all visible debris is removed.
- Seal all clean-up materials (damp paper towel, wet wipe, vacuum bag) in a plastic bag. Check with hazardous waste officials in your area to determine whether you may place this bag in your trash can for regular pick-up or whether you need to deliver the bag to a hazardous waste site.

Compact fluorescent bulbs offer great energy and money savings, and technology has made them interchangeable with the incandescent bulbs that came before them. CFLs are available in many shapes and styles – compatible with most new and existing light fixtures – and are available in a variety of lighting “temperatures.” Warm white lighting closely mimics traditional incandescent light; cooler bluish-white light is also available.

Careful use and disposal of fluorescent bulbs and compact CFLs will ensure that homes and businesses can safely enjoy the advantages these bulbs offer. For more information on CFLs and

their disposal, or for energy conservation tips for your home, contact your county's center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.

Additional information:

[http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr\\_cfls](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr_cfls)

<http://www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/>

<http://earth911.org/>

<http://www.sylvania.com/Recycle/RecyclePak/>

<http://www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling/>

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