

Information for . . .

Households/Consumers

Homeowners can use local government Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) programs for lamps (and all e-waste). Household users of energy efficient, mercury containing fluorescent lamps, including compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), are typically exempt from special disposal requirements although a few states and localities ban homeowners from disposing of such lamps in normal household trash.

Recycling opportunities are becoming increasingly available in many towns and cities at local recycling centers, transfer stations, and by a growing number of retail establishments. There may also be household hazardous waste collection events when fluorescent lamps are collected along with paints, pesticides, used motor oil etc. Residents can contact local waste disposal officials for details or inquire at local hardware and home furnishing and repair outlets where energy efficient lighting is sold.

Always Dispose of Your CFL Properly

While CFLs for your home are not legally considered hazardous waste according to federal solid waste rules, it is still best for the environment to dispose of your CFL properly at end-of-life. In most US jurisdictions, only large commercial users of tubular fluorescent lamps are required to recycle. If recycling is not an option in your area, place the CFL in a sealed plastic bag and dispose the same way you would batteries, oil-based paint and motor oil at your local Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Site. If your local HHW Collection Site cannot accept CFLs, seal the CFL in a plastic bag and place with your regular trash.

Safe cleanup precautions: Recommended cleanup procedures in the event of lamp breakage are provided elsewhere on this web site (see “What Everyone Should Know About Handling Mercury-Containing Lamps”). In general, if a CFL breaks in your home, open nearby windows to disperse any vapor that may escape, carefully sweep up the fragments (do not use your hands) and wipe the area with a disposable paper towel to remove all glass fragments. Do not use a vacuum. Place all fragments in a sealed plastic bag and follow specific disposal instructions referenced above.

Resources for Recycling or Proper Disposal of CFLs

NOTE: As noted above, residential recycling programs are becoming more prevalent in local areas. Nevertheless they are still not yet available in most regions. Some of the most helpful resources for finding recycling services in your area are the following:

1. www.Earth911.org. Once at the web site, enter your zip code, press “GO,” click “Household Hazardous Waste”, then “fluorescent light bulb disposal.” The site will identify your nearest residential mercury recycling facility or mail disposal method. If you find no specific information on CFL disposal, go back and click on the link for “Mercury Containing Items.” Note that consumers can access the same information by phone at **1-800-CLEAN-UP**, which is an automated hotline.

2. **Call your local government** if the Web site and hotline number above does not have your local information. Look on the Internet or in the phone book for your local or municipal government entity responsible for waste collection or household hazardous waste. Or go to the “State Lamp Recycling Regulations and Contacts” page on www.lamprecycle.org.

3. <http://www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling/> is the US EPA’s current site for information about where to recycle lamps. The EPA also provides a recently updated FACT SHEET on CFLs, which can be accessed through www.lamprecycle.org or reached directly at http://www.energystar.gov/ia/partners/promotions/change_light/downloads/Fact_Sheet_Mercury.pdf.

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