

Safe Disposal for Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs)*

*Adapted from <http://www.energystar.gov/cfls>

Do CFLs contain mercury?

CFLs contain a very small amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing – an average of 1-4 milligrams. By comparison, older thermometers contain about 500 milligrams of mercury – an amount equal to the mercury in 125 CFLs. Mercury is an essential part of CFLs; it allows the bulb to be an efficient light source. No mercury is released when the bulbs are intact (not broken) or in use.

Most makers of light bulbs have reduced mercury in their fluorescent lighting products. Thanks to technology advances and a commitment from members of the National Electrical Manufacturers Association, *the average mercury content in CFLs has dropped at least 20 percent in the past year.* Some manufacturers have even made further reductions, dropping mercury content to 1.4 – 2.5 milligrams per light bulb.

How can I dispose of burned-out CFLs here in Cedar Falls?

Please do NOT throw them away in your garbage!

- ✓ **Save the bulbs for a seasonal drive.** WASTE TRAC organizes two annual Black Hawk County drives where you can drop off CFLs. Currently, an event is held in Waterloo every spring and in Cedar Falls in the fall.

Next recycling day: A drop-off is scheduled for spring 2012 in Waterloo, IA, but time and location have not yet been announced. Stay tuned for details.

- ✓ **Drop off unbroken CFLs at a local participating retailer:** The Home Depot in Waterloo (319-232-8889) and ACE Hardware (319-277-4690) will accept burned-out, unbroken CFLs. Please contact the stores for more details.
- ✓ **Drop off linear fluorescent bulbs and ballasts (i.e., T8 or T12 lighting) at a local supplier:**
 - Midwest Lamp Recycling Madison, WI (800-251-7646)
 - ATEC Recycling Des Moines, IA (800-551-4912)
 - Iowa Lamp Handlers Van Meter, IA (515-996-2265)

Do NOT drop CFLs or fluorescents off at the City of Cedar Falls Transfer Station or Recycling Center. Neither facility will accept these materials at this time.

For more information about household hazardous materials and how Black Hawk County residents can ensure proper disposal, please visit www.wastetrac.org or call Waste Trac at (319) 266-8722.

Information from Energy Star website. Courtesy of

A CFL bulb broke in my house, how do I safely clean it up?

Because CFLs contain a small amount of mercury, EPA recommends the following clean-up and disposal guidelines:

1. Before Clean-up: Ventilate the Room

Have people and pets leave the room, and don't let anyone walk through the breakage area on their way out. Open a window and leave the room for 10-15 minutes. Shut off the central forced-air furnace/AC system, if you have one.

2. Clean-Up Steps for Hard Surfaces

Carefully scoop **up** glass fragments and powder using stiff paper or cardboard and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag. Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick **up** any remaining small glass fragments and powder. Wipe the area **clean** with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes and place them in the glass jar or plastic bag. Do not use a vacuum or broom to **clean up** the broken bulb on hard surfaces.

3. Clean-up Steps for Carpeting or Rug:

Carefully pick **up** glass fragments and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag. Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick **up** any remaining small glass fragments and powder. If vacuuming is needed after all visible materials are removed, vacuum the area where the bulb was broken. Remove the vacuum bag (or empty and wipe the canister), and put the bag or vacuum debris in a sealed plastic bag.

4. Clean-up Steps for Clothing, Bedding, etc.:

If clothing or bedding materials come in direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from inside the bulb that may stick to the fabric, the clothing or bedding should be discarded. Do not wash such clothing or bedding because mercury fragments in the clothing may contaminate the machine and/or pollute sewage.

You can, however, wash clothing or other materials that have been exposed to the mercury vapor from a broken CFL, such as the clothing you happened to be wearing when you cleaned **up** the broken CFL, as long as that clothing has not come into direct contact with the materials from the broken bulb. If shoes come into direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from the bulb, wipe them off with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place the towels or wipes in a glass jar or plastic bag for disposal in your outdoor trash container. Wash hands well.

5. Future Cleaning of Carpeting or Rug: Ventilate the Room During and After Vacuuming

The next several times you vacuum, shut off the central forced-air heating/air conditioning system and open a window prior to vacuuming. Keep the central heating/air conditioning system shut off and the window open for at least 15 minutes after vacuuming is completed.

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