

Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) Recycling

Although the State of Florida permits the disposal of used or broken compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) in the garbage, it is best to dispose of them by placing the bulb(s) in two plastic bags, sealing them by tying a knot in the bag, and placing the bag into the outside trash for the next normal trash collection. Since CFLs discarded in the trash or an incinerator may break and some mercury could be released into the environment, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that consumers take advantage of available local CFL recycling options. Locally, Home Depot stores have a CFL recycling program that accepts residential CFLs. Read more about this program [here](#):

Virtually all components of a CFL or other fluorescent light bulb can be recycled. The metal end caps, glass tubing, mercury and phosphor powder can all be separated and reused. Recyclers often sell the metallic portions as scrap metal. The recycled glass can be remanufactured into other glass products. The mercury can be recycled into new fluorescent light bulbs and other mercury-containing devices.

How to Clean-Up a Broken CFL

Since CFLs contain a small amount of mercury, the 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 15 minutes or more.
- Shut off the central forced-air heating/air conditioning 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.

5. Disposal of Clean-up Materials

- Immediately place all cleanup materials outdoors in a trash container or protected area for the next normal trash pickup.
- Wash your hands after disposing of the jars or plastic bags containing clean-up materials. Check with your local or state government about disposal requirements in your specific area.

6. 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.

For more information about compact fluorescent bulbs, visit <http://www.energystar.gov/cfls>

For more information about compact fluorescent bulbs and mercury, visit <http://www.energystar.gov/mercury>

Source: www.energystar.gov (a United States Environmental Protection Agency website)