

What to do When Your Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) Bulb Burns Out or Breaks

CFL Disposal Fact Sheet

A Good Choice for Your Home

CFLs help preserve the environment by using less energy and reducing landfill waste. A CFL uses approximately 75 percent less energy than a standard bulb, saving up to \$30 in energy costs over its lifetime and lasting as long as six to 10 standard bulbs. Using energy-efficient products, like CFLs, is one way to curb our growing energy demands.

CFLs can last up to 10 TIMES longer than standard bulbs.



With more consumers using CFLs, there is increased interest in how to properly dispose of burned out or broken bulbs. CFLs—and all other fluorescent bulbs—require trace amounts of mercury, a toxic metal, in order to work. The amount of mercury in a CFL is extremely small—about the size of the period at the end of this sentence—and does not pose a direct health risk to you or your family.

The bigger concern is the cumulative effects mercury has on the environment as a whole. Repeated exposure to large quantities of mercury represents the biggest health risk.

Mercury occurs naturally in the environment and is used in many household items, including thermostats, thermometers, batteries, and switches for appliances, lights and automobiles. People are primarily exposed to mercury by eating contaminated fish.

Preferred Disposal for Residential CFLs

Fort Collins Utilities and the Larimer County Landfill are working to keep CFL bulbs out of the landfill.

Instead of throwing away your CFLs when they burn out or break, the best option is to recycle them. Put them with your other mercury-containing devices, old cans of paint, insecticides and solvents to take to the Larimer County Landfill Hazardous Waste Collection Facility, 5887 S. Taft Hill Rd. The facility is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The County will route the CFLs to a firm that safely recycles the entire bulb. This service is free for residential customers.

Disposal Tips

To reduce the risk of bulb breakage and protect yourself from cuts, enclose the CFL bulb in a sealed plastic bag.

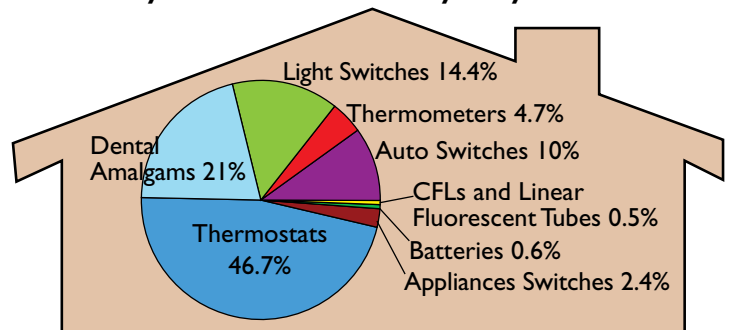
If a CFL bulb breaks, your greatest risk is being cut from the glass rather than exposure to the mercury. However, to minimize risk even further, follow this procedure: sweep up all fragments—don't vacuum; wipe the area with a damp paper towel; put fragments and towel in a plastic bag and seal; open windows to ventilate; and drop off at the Larimer County Landfill.

For more information, call (970) 498-5773 or visit www.co.larimer.co.us/solidwaste/haz.htm.

CFLs Are Safe to Use

CFLs are safe to use in your home—no mercury is released when the bulbs are in use, and they pose no danger when handled properly.

Where you'll find mercury in your home:



Source: North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Disposal of Commercial Fluorescent Lights

Different regulations apply for commercial fluorescent lighting disposal. According to the federal Universal Waste Rule, fluorescent bulbs used in businesses must be recycled or treated as hazardous waste and are not accepted at landfills with regular trash.

There are various options for recycling, including pre-paid recycling boxes and on-site pick up. The best option will depend on the number of bulbs you have.

The Larimer County Landfill provides a fee-based recycling option for Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generators of waste under its Business Hazardous Waste Assistance and Education Program (BHAPE). For more information, contact the landfill at (970) 498-5773 or visit www.co.larimer.co.us/solidwaste/BHAPE.HTM for details.

For More Information

Call: (970) 221-6700 • TDD: (970) 224-6003

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City of Fort Collins
Utilities