

Do CFLs contain mercury?

A very small amount of mercury is sealed within the glass tubing – an average of 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.

What precautions should I take when using CFLs in my home?

CFLs are made of glass and can break if dropped or roughly handled. Be careful when removing the bulb from its packaging, installing it or replacing it. Always screw and unscrew the light bulb by its base (not the glass) and never forcefully twist the CFL into a light socket. If a CFL breaks in your home, follow the cleanup recommendations listed previously. Used CFLs should be disposed of properly.

For more information ...

Contact your local municipal solid waste agency directly or go to www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling, www.earth911.org or www.lamprecycle.org to identify local recycling options.

What should I do with a CFL when it burns out?

1. Recycle.

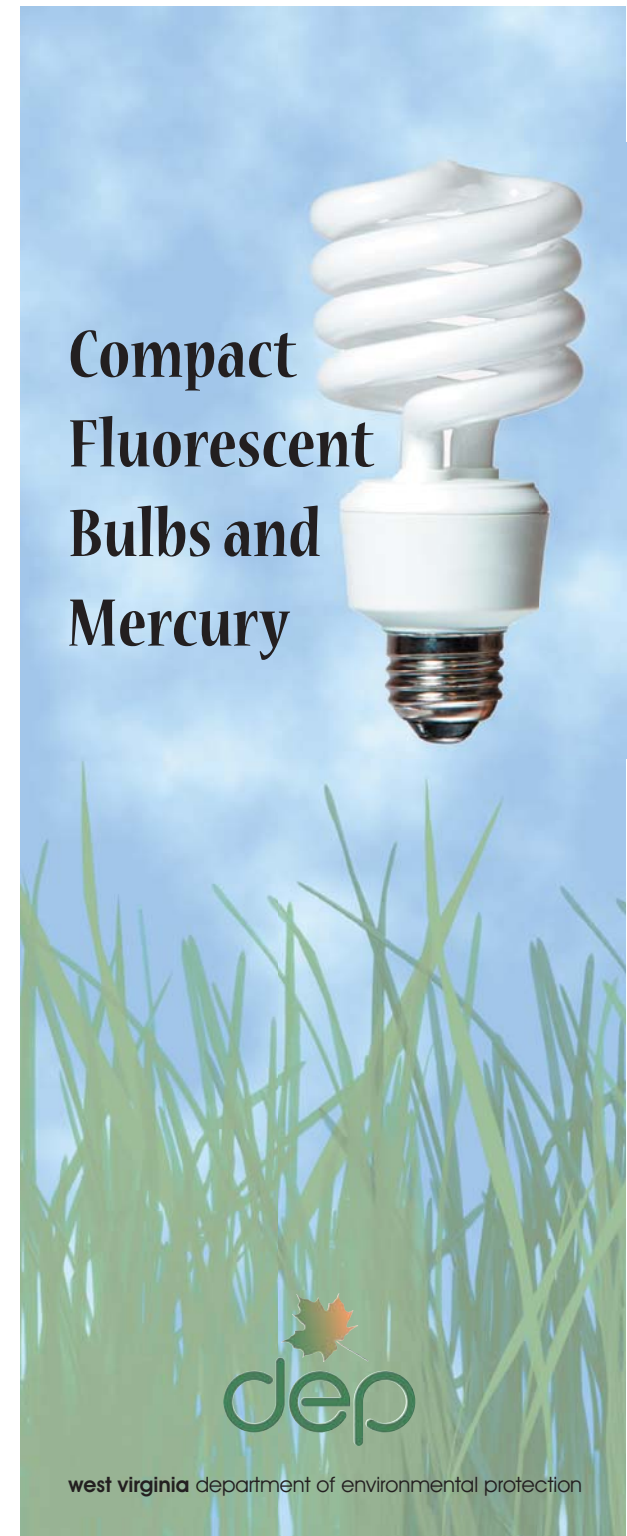
EPA recommends that consumers take advantage of available local recycling options for compact fluorescent light bulbs. Consumers can contact their local municipal solid waste agency directly or go to www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling, www.earth911.org or www.lamprecycle.org to identify local recycling options.

In the Charleston area, Home Depot will recycle your used CFLs and other fluorescent bulbs, up to T-12s.

2. Seal and put in outside trash.

Seal the bulb in two plastic bags and put into the trash bags you place into the outside trash or other protected outside location for the next normal trash collection. Never send a fluorescent light bulb or any other mercury-containing product to an incinerator.

If your ENERGY STAR qualified CFL burns out before it should, look at the base to find the manufacturer's name. Visit the manufacturer's website to find the customer service contact information to inquire about a refund or replacement. Manufacturers producing ENERGY STAR qualified CFLs are required to offer at least a two-year limited warranty (covering manufacturer defects) for CFLs used at home. In the future, save your receipts to document the date of purchase.



How should I clean up a broken fluorescent bulb?

Because CFLs contain a small amount of mercury, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends the following clean-up and disposal guidelines:

1. Before cleanup, air out the room.

- Have people and pets leave the room. Don't let anyone walk through the breakage area.
- Open a window and leave the room for 15 minutes or more.
- Shut off the central forced-air heating/air conditioning system.

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 pieces and powder.
- Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place towels 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 rugs.

- 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 thrown away. 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 are 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 clean-up 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 cleanup materials.
- Check with your local government about disposal requirements in your specific area. In general, West Virginia does not prohibit disposal of residential CFL bulbs, when properly disposed of as outlined above, in the trash. However, you are encouraged to take mercury-containing CFLs to a local recycling center if one exists.

6. Future cleaning of carpeting or rug – air out 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 before vacuuming.
- Keep the central heating/air conditioning system shut off and the window open for at least 15 minutes after vacuuming is completed.