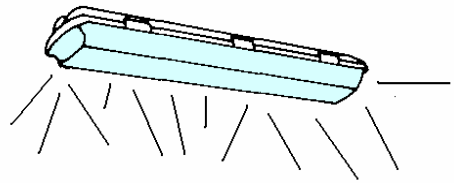


Proper Storage, Handling and Disposal of Mercury-containing Fluorescent Lights



Fluorescent lights are often found in garages, basements and other work areas of the home. Now these lights are being made into compact forms to replace ordinary incandescent light bulbs. Fluorescent lights are a good choice because they use up to 50% less energy than standard incandescent light bulbs, but they require some caution when handling them because they contain a very small amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing.

Most fluorescent light manufacturers now offer “low mercury” lights, which are more environmentally friendly than those made several years ago. Check the package. Also see this [website](#).* The amount of mercury varies with the brand and the size of the light. Buy the light with the lowest mercury content that still suits your needs.



standard incandescent light bulb



compact fluorescent light (CFL)

HANDLING AND STORAGE

- Fluorescent lights contain a small amount of mercury. Store the lights in a box or case to prevent breakage before use. Keep them out of reach of children or pets.
- Handle fluorescent lights carefully to prevent breakage.

DISPOSAL

- If at all possible, recycle burnt-out fluorescent lights, or save them for the household hazardous waste pick-up in your area. For more information see <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/SWB/doc/fluorescent.html>
- If recycling isn't possible, put the burned-out lights in a double plastic bag to prevent breakage. Seal the bag and place it in a cardboard box (if available.). The bag or box can then go in the regular trash.
- (Non-residential facilities may need to follow other procedures. Contact the Environment Department's Hazardous Waste Bureau at 476-6000 for disposal information.)

CLEAN-UP IN CASE OF BREAKAGE

- If a light breaks, it releases a small amount mercury (from 4 -30 milligrams). This amount of mercury exposure could pose a [health risk](#) particularly to pregnant woman and small children.
- Open the window and leave the area for 15 minutes. If possible, close doors that lead into the room. Keep children and pets away from the area. Pregnant woman should ask someone else in the household to do this job.

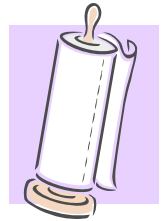


- **Do not use a vacuum cleaner at this point.**



* These values are constantly changing as manufactures work to lower the amount of mercury in fluorescent lights

- Have a container ready for disposal of the broken glass and clean-up materials, A heavy double plastic bag, or empty food container (such as from cottage cheese or from deli take out) will work for this purpose..



- Pick up the larger pieces first. Do not use your bare hands. If possible, wear disposable gloves. If gloves are not available, pick up the larger pieces using a wet paper towel or disposable wipe. Put the large pieces in your disposal container.

- Carefully scoop up the small slivers of glass fragments and powder with stiff paper or cardboard. Put this in your disposal bag or container.

- Use a sticky tape (such as duct tape) to pick up small pieces of glass and powder.



- Then use damp paper towels or disposable wipes to clean up the area. Place these paper towels or wipes in the disposal bag or container as well.

- **If the light broke in a carpeted area, do all these steps before any vacuuming is done.** The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) recommends that if you vacuum the area where the bulb was broken, that you “remove the vacuum bag once you are done cleaning the area (or empty and wipe the canister), and put the vacuum bag and/or vacuum debris, as well as the cleaning materials, in 2 sealed plastic bags” for disposal.

- Take off the disposable gloves, by turning them inside out as you remove them, and put them in the bag or container. Seal the bag or container to prevent anyone else from coming in contact with the contents.

-At this point, if possible, place the plastic bag or food container into a cardboard box for extra protection. Seal up the box with tape.



- In New Mexico, this sealed bag, container, or box with the broken fluorescent light and the clean-up waste may be thrown away in the household trash.

- Wash your hands thoroughly after the clean-up.



For more information on fluorescent lights, see the following web sites;

http://www.energystar.gov/ia/partners/promotions/change_light/downloads/Fact_Sheet_Mercury.pdf

<http://www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/index.htm#fluorescent>

<http://www.earthday.net/resources/2006materials/cf-facts.aspx>

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/SWB/doc/fluorescent.html>



Environmental Health Epidemiology Bureau
505-476-1734

New Mexico Environment Department
Solid Waste Bureau
505-827-0197