

Mercury & CFLs

Mercury is essential to compact fluorescent lights (CFLs). Without it, CFLs wouldn't be efficient light sources. The amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing of a CFL is around 4 milligrams - roughly equal to an amount that would cover the tip of a ball-point pen. By comparison, older thermometers contain about 500 milligrams of mercury.

CFLs are safe to use despite the mercury they contain. No mercury is released when the bulbs are intact or in use, but mercury vapor can be released if a bulb breaks.

CLEANING UP A BROKEN CFL BULB

If a CFL bulb breaks in your home, follow these steps:

- Step 1: Open nearby windows.
- Step 2: Proceed to carefully and thoroughly sweep up the fragments using stiff paper or cardboard. DO NOT use your hands.
- Step 3: Use a sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder. DO NOT use a vacuum.
- Step 4: When you've gotten all the small fragments of glass, place the used tape and all other clean up materials in a sealable container.
- Step 5: Allow the room where the bulb was broken to air out as much as possible.
- Step 6: Check with your local government about disposal requirements to learn if your area requires fluorescent bulbs (broken and unbroken) to be taken to a local recycling center. If you find that your area has no requirements, you can dispose of the materials in your household trash.