

# Compact Fluorescent Lights

Compact Fluorescent Lightbulbs (CFL) contain a small amount of mercury and require special handling and care to dispose.

## Broken CFL Clean Up Procedure

### What to Do if a Fluorescent Light Bulb or Tube Breaks in Your Home

Fluorescent light bulbs contain a small amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing. When a fluorescent bulb breaks in your home, some of this mercury is released as mercury vapor. The broken bulb can continue to release mercury vapor until it is cleaned up and removed from the residence.

To minimize exposure to mercury vapor, EPA recommends that residents follow the cleanup and disposal steps below. This cleanup guidance represents the minimum actions recommended to clean up a broken CFL, and will be updated as EPA identifies more effective cleanup practices.

## Cleanup And Disposal Overview

### The important steps to reduce exposure to mercury vapor are:

#### 1. Before cleanup

- \* Have people and pets leave the room.
- \* Air out the room for 5-10 minutes by opening a window or door.
- \* Shut off the central forced air heating/air conditioning system.
- \* Collect materials needed to clean up broken bulb.

#### 2. During cleanup

- \* Be thorough in collecting broken glass and visible powder.
- \* Place cleanup materials in a sealable container.

#### 3. After cleanup

- \* Promptly place all bulb debris and cleanup materials outdoors in a trash container or protected area until materials can be disposed of properly. Avoid leaving any bulb fragments or cleanup materials indoors.
- \* For several hours, continue to air out the room where the bulb was broken and leave the H&AC system shut off.

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## Special CFL Cleanup Considerations

### Before Cleanup

- \* Have people and pets leave the room, and avoid the breakage area on the way out.
- \* Open a window or door to the outdoors and leave the room for 5-10 minutes.
- \* Shut off the central forced-air heating/air conditioning (H&AC) system, if you have one.
- \* Collect materials you will need to clean up the broken bulb.

### Cleanup Steps for Hard Surfaces, Carpet & Rugs

- \* Carefully scoop up glass fragments and powder using cardboard and place debris and cardboard in a glass jar with a metal lid. If a glass jar is not available, use a sealable 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.
- \* Vacuuming of hard surfaces during cleanup is not recommended unless broken glass remains after all other cleanup steps have been taken.
- \* Promptly place all bulb debris and cleanup materials, including vacuum cleaner bags, outdoors in a trash container or protected area until materials can be disposed of properly.
- \* Wash your hands with soap and water after disposing of the bulb debris and cleanup materials.
- \* Continue to air out the room where the bulb was broken and leave the H&AC system shut off for an hour.

### Actions You Can Take to Prevent Broken Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs

Fluorescent bulbs are made of glass and can break if dropped or roughly handled. To avoid breaking a bulb, follow these general practices:

- \* Always switch off and allow a working CFL bulb to cool before handling.
- \* Always handle CFL bulbs carefully to avoid breakage.
  - If possible, screw/unscrew the CFL by holding the plastic or ceramic base, not the glass tubing.
  - Gently screw in the CFL until snug. Do not over-tighten.
  - Never forcefully twist the glass tubing.
- \* Consider not using CFLs in lamps that can be easily knocked over, in unprotected light fixtures, or in lamps that are incompatible with the spiral or folded shape of many CFLs..
- \* Do not use CFL bulbs in locations where they can easily be broken, such as play spaces.
- \* Use CFL bulbs that have a glass or plastic cover over the spiral or folded glass tube, if available. These
- \* Consider using a drop cloth (e.g., plastic sheet or beach towel) when changing a fluorescent light bulb in case a breakage should occur. The drop cloth will help prevent mercury contamination of nearby surfaces and can be bundled with the bulb debris for disposal.