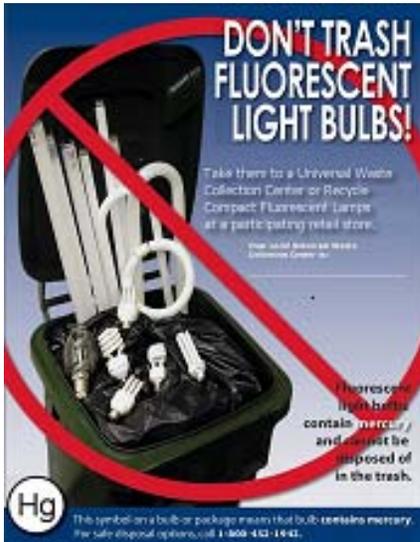


CFL and Fluorescent Tube Safety, Cleanup and Recycling



Proper Recycling of Fluorescent Bulbs

Maine law does not allow fluorescent bulbs, including compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), to be disposed of in the trash because they contain a small amount of mercury. Used fluorescent bulbs need to be recycled. There are two main ways to recycle spent bulbs:

1. You can recycle intact CFLs at any of more than 200 [participating retail stores](#) (MS Excel) ([pdf format](#)) for free. [Efficiency Maine](#) has launched this CFL Recycling Program. The yellow decal below will be in the windows of the participating stores across the State of Maine. These stores are trained in accordance with Maine DEP requirements. The used, unbroken CFLs will be collected and recycled, with as many of the CFL components as possible recovered for reuse. If anyone finds any errors or changes, please contact the Hazardous Waste Program staff at 207-287-2651.
2. You can also recycle CFLs (and other fluorescent bulbs) where your municipality has made [lamp recycling arrangements](#) (MS Excel) ([pdf format](#)). There may be a small charge for recycling the bulb at a municipal recycling facility. The green blocks signify that we have gathered the information from those towns. White means we were not able to reach anyone in that municipal office. Blue means the facility will take from anyone in the state not just the residents in their town.

What if I accidentally break a fluorescent lamp in my house?

The lamp contains a small amount of mercury, but you can clean this up yourself if you do the following:

- Do not use a vacuum cleaner to clean up the breakage. This will spread the mercury vapor and dust throughout the area and could potentially contaminate the vacuum.
- Keep people and pets away from the breakage area until the cleanup is complete.
- Ventilate the area by opening windows, and leave the area for 15 minutes before returning to begin the cleanup. Mercury vapor levels will be lower by then.
- For maximum protection and if you have them, wear rubber gloves to protect your hands from the sharp glass.
- Carefully remove the larger pieces and place them in a secure closed container, preferably a glass container with a metal screw top lid and seal like a canning jar.¹ A glass jar with a good seal works best to contain any mercury vapors inside.²
- Next, begin collecting the smaller pieces and dust. You can use two stiff pieces of paper such as index cards or playing cards to scoop up pieces.
- Pat the area with the sticky side of duct tape, packing tape or masking tape to pick up fine particles. Wipe the area with a wet wipe or damp paper towel to pick up even finer particles.
- Put all waste and materials into the glass container, including all material used in the cleanup that may have been contaminated with mercury. Label the container as "Universal Waste - broken lamp."
- Remove the container with the breakage and cleanup materials from your home. This is particularly important if you do not have a glass container.
- Continue ventilating the room for several hours.
- Wash your hands and face.
- Take the glass container with the waste material to a facility that accepts "universal waste" for recycling. To determine where your municipality has made arrangements for recycling of this type of waste, call your municipal office or find your town in this list [municipal collection sites](#) (MS Excel format) ([pdf format](#)).
- When a break happens on carpeting, homeowners may consider removing throw rugs or the area of carpet where the breakage occurred as a precaution, particularly if the rug is in an area frequented by infants, small children or pregnant women.
- Finally, if the carpet is not removed, open the window to the room during the next several times you vacuum the carpet to provide good ventilation.

The next time you replace a lamp, consider putting a drop cloth on the floor so that any accidental breakage can be easily cleaned up. If consumers remain concerned regarding safety, they may consider not utilizing fluorescent lamps in situations where they could easily be broken. Consumers may also consider avoiding CFL usage in bedrooms or carpeted areas frequented by infants, small children, or pregnant women. Finally, consider not storing too many used/spent lamps before recycling as that may increase your chances of breakage. Don't forget to properly recycle your used fluorescent bulbs so they don't break and put mercury into our environment.

¹Other jars that can be made of glass and also work are pickle, peanut butter and applesauce jars. Not ideal but also a good choice for containing breakage is a heavy duty #2 plastic container with either a screw lid or push-on lid such as a joint compound bucket or certain kitty litter-type containers.

²If the only suitable jar available has food in it, you may need to empty it into another container before using it.

Where to take items to be recycled: