



STATE OF LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HOSPITALS



Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFLs)

What is a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL)?

A CFL bulb is a new type of light bulb that uses 75% less energy than a standard incandescent bulb and may last up to 10 times longer. The CFL bulb is replacing the incandescent light bulb which will not be available after 2014. The new CFL bulbs screws into a standard light socket, such as a lamp or ceiling light fixture the same as a traditional bulb.

Why should people use CFLs?

The CFL bulb is an easy way to reduce energy use at home and ultimately decrease greenhouse gas emissions. Lighting accounts for 20% of the average electric bill in the home. Because CFL bulbs use less energy and generate less heat, they reduce energy use and lower cooling needs. This could lower energy costs by \$25 - \$30 over a CFL's lifetime.

Are there other issues associated with using CFLs?

CFLs contain a small amount of mercury that is sealed within the light bulb. No mercury is released when the bulbs are in use. The CFL contains about 5 milligrams of mercury whereas an older thermometer contains about 500 milligrams of mercury. It would take 100 CFL bulbs to have the same amount of mercury as a thermometer.

Is there a health risk for using CFLs?

Under normal use, there is no risk to the mercury sealed within the CFL. However, care should be taken to avoid breaking the CFL which could release the mercury inside. There is not enough mercury within one bulb to make anyone sick, however, it is best to avoid any exposure to mercury.

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. Make sure you turn off the light switch before replacing any light bulb to avoid electrical shock. Always screw and unscrew the lamp by its ceramic base – do not hold it by the glass tubes and be careful not to touch the metal screw part at the bottom. Never forcefully twist the CFL into a light socket. If a CFL breaks in your home, follow the clean-up recommendations and proper disposal.

How should I clean up a broken CFL bulb?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends the following guidelines:

- Ventilate the room: Open doors and window for at least 15 minutes.
- People, especially pregnant women and children, and pets should leave the room.
- Turn off your air conditioner or heater so the mercury vapor does not circulate to other parts of the house.
- Avoid inhaling the dust or contact with your skin.
- On hard surfaces,
 - Carefully pick up the glasses and place them in a closed container, such as a sealable plastic bag.
 - Remove small pieces of glass and dust with stiff pieces of paper such as index cards or cardboard. Do not use a metal dustpan because the mercury will stick to it.
 - Pat the area with the sticky side of duct, packing, or masking tape to remove the dust. Wipe the area with a damp paper towel. Rewipe with a clean paper towel at least 3 times. Put the clean up materials into a sealed plastic bag.
 - Do not vacuum as vacuuming will spread the mercury vapor to other areas.
 - Throw the waste away with your household trash or label the waste "Universal Waste- broken lamp" and take to a recycling center.
- On carpeting or other soft items like furniture, toys, bedding or clothes, Do not vacuum until the following steps are done:
 - Pick up the glass and broken parts and place in a sealable plastic bag.
 - Use the sticky side of duct tape or packaging tape to pick up the remaining powder and glass. Repeat as many times as necessary to remove all of the dust and glass.
 - Put the clean up materials and tape in the bag and seal the bag and throw it away in your household trash or take to a recycling center.
 - If it is possible to remove the carpeting, place it outside to allow the mercury to vaporize,
 - If removing the carpet is not possible, keep people and pets off the carpeting and continue to ventilate for a few days. (Raising the room temperature while the windows are securely opened to ventilate vapors makes this process go faster).
 - After this time, the mercury vapor should be gone and the carpet can be safely vacuumed.
 - Change the vacuum cleaner bag or empty its dust bin after vacuuming.
- Throw away broken bulb and cleaning materials with your household trash or label the waste "Universal Waste- broken lamp" and take to a recycling center.

How should I dispose of unbroken or burned out CFLs?

The best way to get rid of unbroken CFLs is to recycle them. Check with your local environmental agency, local recycling center (see below), or go to <http://www.earth911.org> to find places that accept CFLs. If you need to throw a CFL bulb out, seal it in two plastic bags, one inside the other, and throw it in the outside trash. Never burn a CFL bulb. The following areas were designated by the Louisiana Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality as locations where residents can drop off CFL bulbs:

Lamp Recyclers of Louisiana, Inc. (or LEI)
46257 Morris Road
Hammond, LA

*For more information, visit <http://www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling/index.htm>,
<http://maine.gov/dep/rwm/homeowner/cflreport.htm>, <http://energystar.gov/cfls>, or
call the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals at 1-888-293-7020.*