



Hazardous Materials Awareness Week January 18-24, 2009

South Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee



Theme: Minimizing Mercury Releases
Focus: Proper Disposal of Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs)

What is Mercury?

- Mercury is a substance naturally found in the environment
- In its elemental form, Mercury is a shiny, silver-white liquid metal
- Mercury can evaporate to form colorless, odorless mercury vapors

How is it harmful?

- Exposure to high levels of mercury can permanently damage the brain causing personality changes and vision, hearing and memory problems
- Short term exposure to mercury vapors may cause lung damage, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, high blood pressure, skin rashes and eye irritation
- Very young children are more sensitive than adults and may develop problems of their nervous and digestive systems and kidney damage
- Pregnant mothers who consume contaminated fish may harm their babies

Where can Mercury be found in the home?

- Non-digital thermometers and air conditioning thermostats
- Blood pressure measuring equipment and some electric switches
- Fluorescent lights like mercury vapor and high pressure sodium lamps
- Some neon lights and Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs)



What are Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs)?

- Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs) are small fluorescent light bulbs that can be screwed into a regular light socket
- CFLs contain a very small amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing – an average of 4 milligrams – about the amount that would cover the tip of a ballpoint pen

Benefits of using CFLs

- EPA Energy Star qualified CFLs use up to 75% less electricity than comparable incandescent light bulbs and can last up to 10 times longer
- Electricity use is the main source of mercury emissions in the U.S. By using less electricity than incandescent lights, CFLs can help reduce the amount of mercury in the environment.



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Safe Disposal Locations

- Miami-Dade County Permanent Home Chemical Collection Centers
West Dade: 8831 NW 58th Street
South Dade: 23707 SW 97th Avenue, Gate-B
- Broward County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Centers
Main: 2780 N. Powerline Rd, Pompano Beach
Central: 5490 Reese Rd, Davie
South: 5601 W. Hallandale Beach Blvd, West Park
- Monroe County Transfer and Recycle Centers
Key Largo: 200 Magnolia Street, Mile Marker 100.2, Key Largo
Long Key: Mile Marker 68, Long Key
Cudjoe Key: Blimp Rd, Mile Marker 21.5, Summerland Key
- All Home Depot Stores
Bring expired unbroken CFL bulbs in a sealed plastic bag and deposit in a CFL collection box located near the entrance or exit inside the store

How to clean up a broken CFL

- Never use a vacuum cleaner or broom!
- Evacuate the room for 15 minutes or more and shut off the central A/C
- Place a pedestal or floor fan in front of an open window to blow air out
- Wear disposable gloves
- Carefully pick up glass fragments using stiff paper or cardboard
- Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up remaining small glass fragments and powder
- Wipe the area clean with wet paper towels or disposable wet wipes
- Place all materials in double sealed plastic bags and wash hands
- Take plastic bags to a county recycling center

Additional Information and Resources

- State Emergency Response Commission (SERC)
<http://www.floridadisaster.org/cps/serc/news.htm>
- Earth911 (one stop shop for recycling and reusing your trash)
<http://earth911.org/hazardous/cfl/>
- WSVN-TV Special Investigative Report "Light Fright"
<http://www4.wsvn.com/features/articles/investigations/Mi104181/>
- Green Living (Climate Change, Mercury, Recycling)
<http://wn.wsvn.com/Global/category.asp?C=92036>
- USEPA Mercury Bulb Recycling Resources
<http://www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling/>