

COMPACT FLUORESCENT LIGHT BULBS: A Bright Idea Mission Trace ACE Hardware

Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFLs) are the brightest idea to hit the lighting industry since, well ... the invention of the light bulb itself. Energy Star, a federal government program, has kicked off the "Change a Light Change the World Campaign." The campaign sheds light on the benefits of CFL bulbs. For example, an Energy Star qualified compact fluorescent bulb uses about **75 percent less energy** than a standard light bulb.

This efficiency translates to a CFL bulb life of up to 10 times longer than regular light bulbs and lowers your energy bills by at least \$30 per bulb – not to mention fewer hours of fuel burning at the power plant which reduces greenhouse gas emissions. According to Energy Star, for every 100 regular light bulbs replaced by CFLs, there is an environmental benefit similar to removing three cars from the road for one year.

It might be hard to see how one person saving \$30 on a light bill will "change the world," but numbers quickly add up. For example, if every Thornton resident purchased just one CFL bulb, cumulatively consumers would see a decrease in energy bills, in Thornton by **(30 x population)** dollars. In terms of environmental impact, the City of Thornton would remove the equivalent of **(population / 100 x 3.21)** cars from Thornton streets for one year.

Limon Town Administrator Joe Kiely says, as a town Limon has been hip to the difference CFL bulbs make for years and today CFL bulbs are used in all public buildings. Kiely adds one of his favorite stories is that Limon's new medical clinic, which is 4 to 5 times larger than the old clinic (destroyed in the 1990 tornado) actually has lower energy bills than its much smaller predecessor. CFL bulbs can't get all of the credit because the entire building was "built green" but they are certainly a big part of the improvement.

There is another side to the story that is important to note when talking CFLs. Some environmentalists say fluorescent lamps are an environmental paradox: they are environmentally sound because they use a fraction of energy to produce light but, because the bulbs contain mercury, the bulbs become environmentally hazardous if not properly recycled, and recycling mercury isn't as easy as recycling your newspaper or milk jug.

That's about to change however because now, consumers have a new option to recycle CFL bulbs.

Thanks to funding from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, EnCana Oil and Gas and Xcel Energy, **Ace Hardware stores state wide will now take your old CFL bulbs (and/or mercury containing thermostats) and recycle them for free. It's as simple as bringing your bulbs to your local Ace Hardware where a store associate who will safely pack and ship for recycling.**

"We're pleased to partner with the State to offer our customers, and people throughout Colorado, a way to easily dispose of used Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs," said Tim Taylor, president and CEO of Public Service Co. of Colorado, an Xcel Energy company.

If the thought of mercury in your home has you a little alarmed you shouldn't be.

"Although mercury is a neurotoxin, the benefits of using CFLs outweigh the risks of mercury exposure," says Patrick Hamel with the Colorado Department of Health and Environment.

Avoiding exposure is as simple as avoiding breaking the glass. Hamel adds you should hold the CFL by the base and not the bulb. If a CFL breaks, the first rule is: do not use a vacuum cleaner, which will spread the mercury as an aerosol. Pregnant or breast feeding women, as well as children and pets should be kept away. The next step is to open windows, carefully sweep the pieces on to a sheet of disposable cardboard and deposit the cardboard and glass into a zip-top plastic bag.

Hamel adds, "if possible, this bag should be taken to an authorized recycling center, but if that is impractical, residential users are allowed to dispose of CFLs in the trash."

These precautions aren't meant to be alarming, remember, the mercury inside is very small. To give you a point of reference as to how small remember the old-school thermometer our moms were always concerned might break? It takes around 200 CFL bulbs to equal the amount of mercury found in a mercury thermometer.

Naturally, with new technology comes apprehension but, from the perspective of your local Ace Hardware owner, these bulbs are catching on. We've seen a 15% to 20% increase in sales over last year due in part to the increase in variety. Virtually every type and configuration of CFL made is available at your local Ace Hardware store.

CFL bulbs are definitely becoming the bulb of choice and for good reason. The extra effort in handling is well worth the benefit to not only your family's bottom line, but our environment.

Ace Hardware is also your Recycle Drop off Center for:

- **Lithium Batteries, including Cell Phone Batteries**
- **Old Mercury Thermostats**
- **Old Mercury Thermometers**

Bring you items to the Service Center

Any questions you can contact your local Ace Hardware which is

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