

# Fact Sheet on Mercury in Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL)

## I have heard that there is mercury in Compact Fluorescent Lamps. Is it true?

There is a small amount of mercury in CFLs to help them produce light. But did you know that this amount is less than 1/5 the amount found in a common watch battery? The mercury in a CFL is used to create the light and is totally contained in the fluorescent tube. The following is a chart that compares the mercury content of CFLs to other household uses:

| Product                           | Amount of Mercury        | Number of Equivalent CFLS |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Compact fluorescent lamp          | 5 milligrams             | 1                         |
| Watch battery                     | 25 milligrams            | 5                         |
| Dental amalgams                   | 500 milligrams           | 100                       |
| Home thermometer                  | 500 milligrams - 2 grams | 100 - 400                 |
| Float switches in sump pumps      | 2 grams                  | 400                       |
| Tilt thermostat                   | 3 grams                  | 600                       |
| Electrical tilt switches & relays | 3.5 grams                | 700                       |

## What should I do if my CFL breaks?

In the event that your bulb breaks, keep the area well ventilated by opening a window. Remove all materials you can **without** using a vacuum cleaner. This can be done by carefully scooping up the glass fragments and powder with a stiff piece of paper or cardboard or using sticky tape (or duct tape) to pick up small pieces. Place the broken pieces in a sealable plastic bag and wipe the area with a damp paper towel or disposable wet wipe to pick up any stray shards of glass or fine particles. Place towels in sealable plastic bag as well. The first time you vacuum over the area where clean up was done, remove the vacuum bag (or empty the waste canister) and dispose of in a plastic bag and place in the outside trash. You may also cut out the contaminated section of carpet and place in a sealed plastic bag. Be sure to wash your hands after you're done cleaning. Contact your local Household Hazardous Waste Program for mercury disposal information.

For more detailed clean up instructions see:  
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hm/mercury/hgcleanup.pdf>

## What do I do with my burnt out CFL?

**Recycle** it, of course! Many county household hazardous waste collection facilities or collection events will accept CFLs. When transporting CFLs to your local recycling site, be sure to place in a sealable plastic bag in case it should break.

To learn more about residential recycling of household hazardous waste see:  
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hm/hhwcollect.htm>



## How Can CFLs actually reduce mercury emissions?

CFLs prevent mercury emissions by reducing emissions from coal-fired power plants. In Colorado, approximately 70% of our electricity is generated from coal. See the chart below to see how CFLs compare to incandescent bulbs. Keep in mind, if you recycle your CFL, the 5 mg of mercury in the bulb will be recycled, keeping it out of the landfill and the atmosphere.

