



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## SAFE HANDLING OF COMPACT FLUORESCENT LAMPS, CFLS

### Why use CFLs?

- CFLs use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs.
- They last up to 10 times longer.
- CFLs produce about 75 percent less heat, so they are safer to operate and can cut energy costs associated with home cooling.
- Making this change can help you use less electricity at home and prevent greenhouse gas emissions that lead to global climate change.

### CFLs are safe

CFLs are used safely by millions of people around the world. They do contain a very small amount of mercury (four mg, compared to 500 mg in a mercury thermometer) and should be recycled to capture the mercury for reuse. No mercury is released when CFLs are intact or in use.

### CFLs are better for the environment

Using CFLs uses less electricity and provides the same amount of light with 70 percent fewer emissions than an incandescent bulb. CFLs also help to reduce other pollutants associated with electricity production and landfill waste (because the bulbs last longer and can be recycled).

### What you need to know about mercury in CFLs

The mercury in a CFL is in vapor form, not liquid. It cannot spill out of the bulb or be handled and absorbed as with liquid mercury. As a CFL ages, the mercury inside slowly bonds with the phosphor coating inside the lamp, making it generally unavailable to the atmosphere or for human absorption. The lack of available gaseous mercury is one reason why the lamp eventually fails. This means that burned-out lamps pose very little human health risk.

### What should I do with my CFLs when they burn out?

CFLs last a long time, but when they do burn out they should be recycled so the mercury, metal and glass can be reclaimed for use in future products. CFLs should be disposed of properly with other household hazardous waste products. Follow these CFL disposal steps for intact bulbs:

- Wrap the bulb in a sealed plastic bag.
- Take your CFLs to one of the recycling centers listed on this sheet.

### What should I do if a CFL breaks?

A broken CFL poses no immediate health risk to you or your family if it's cleaned up promptly. Because CFLs contain such a small amount of mercury, being injured by glass shards is your greatest risk from breakage.

To minimize any risks, follow these clean-up and disposal guidelines, for hard surface or carpet, recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency:

- Open a window, leave the room, and restrict access for at least 15 minutes.
- Wear disposable rubber gloves, if available (do not use your bare hands).
- Carefully scoop up the fragments with stiff paper or cardboard.
- On hard surfaces, wipe the area clean with a damp paper towel or disposable wet wipe.
- Use sticky tape (such as duct tape) to pick up small glass pieces.
- Place the broken fragments and paper towel in a plastic bag, seal it and place the bag in a second sealed bag. Then place the bag into the outside trash, as there is no longer mercury contained in the bulb to be reclaimed. If vacuuming is needed, remove the vacuum bag once you finish cleaning the area (or empty and wipe the canister) and put the bag and/or vacuum debris in two sealed plastic bags. Then place the bag in the outside trash.



For more information on CFLs and mercury, visit [www.energytrust.org/renters](http://www.energytrust.org/renters) or call **1.866.368.7878**.

## FREE RECYCLING OPTIONS FOR RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS

### Portland Metro Area

Metro Central Station, Household Hazardous Waste Facility  
6161 NW 61st Ave., Portland

Metro South Station, Household Hazardous Waste Facility  
2001 Washington St., Oregon City

For more information, visit [www.oregonmetro.gov](http://www.oregonmetro.gov) or call 503.234.3000.

### Statewide

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Household Hazardous Waste Program

For more information, visit [www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/hhw/collection.htm](http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/hhw/collection.htm) or call 503.229.5913.

### Retailers

**IKEA:** IKEA offers a free take-back program. Each store accepts used CFLs and provides free disposal and recycling even if you didn't purchase the bulb from IKEA.

**Home Depot:** Home Depot offers recycling for any used, unbroken CFL. The store associate behind the returns desk can help you with your recycling. The bulbs will be handled responsibly by an environmental management company.