

# CFLs—A Good Choice for Your Home

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) help preserve the environment by using less energy and reducing landfill waste. A CFL uses approximately 75 percent less energy than a standard incandescent bulb, saving up to \$30 in energy costs over its lifetime and lasting as long as six to 10 standard bulbs. Using energy-efficient products, like CFLs, is one way to curb our growing energy demands.

With more consumers using CFLs, there is increased interest in how to properly dispose of burned out or broken bulbs. CFLs—and all other fluorescent bulbs—require trace amounts of mercury, a toxic metal, in order to work. The amount of mercury in a CFL is extremely small—about the size of the period at the end of this sentence—and does not pose a direct health risk to you or your family.

A bigger concern is the cumulative effect mercury has on the environment as a whole. Repeated exposure to large quantities of mercury is a health risk.

## Residential CFL Disposal Options

Fort Collins Utilities and the Larimer County Landfill are working together to keep CFL bulbs out of the landfill.

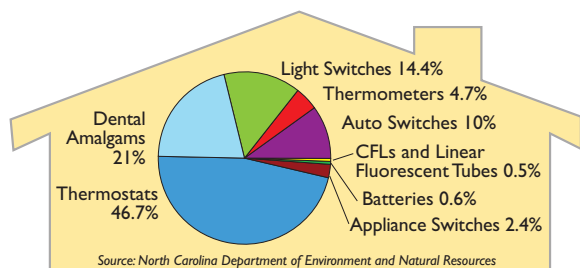
Intact CFL bulbs (see details below) and other mercury-containing devices, old cans of paint, insecticides and solvents, should be taken to the Larimer County Landfill Hazardous Waste Collection Facility, 5887 S. Taft Hill Rd. (The facility is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

When your CFLs break, recycling is not the best option. Once broken, the mercury in the bulb is no longer retrievable for recycling. Broken CFLs should be placed in a plastic bag (see details below) and disposed of with other household trash.

## Disposal Tips

- Enclose the burned out, unbroken CFL bulb in a sealed plastic bag to reduce the risk of bulb breakage and protect yourself from cuts.
- If a CFL bulb breaks, your greatest risk is being cut from the glass rather than exposure to the mercury. To minimize risk even further, follow this procedure:
  - open windows to ventilate;
  - sweep up all fragments—don't vacuum;
  - wipe the area with a damp paper towel;
  - put fragments and towel in a plastic bag and seal; and
  - dispose of with household trash.

### Where You'll Find Mercury in Your Home



CFLs are safe to use in your home—no mercury is released when the bulbs are in use, and they pose no danger when handled properly.

Mercury occurs naturally in the environment and is used in many household items, including thermostats, thermometers and batteries, as well as switches for appliances, lights and automobiles. People are primarily exposed to mercury by eating contaminated fish.

## Disposal Options for Commercial Fluorescent Lights

Different regulations apply for commercial fluorescent lighting disposal. According to the federal Universal Waste Rule, fluorescent bulbs used in businesses must be recycled or treated as hazardous waste and are not accepted at landfills with regular trash.

There are various options for recycling, including pre-paid recycling boxes and on-site pickup. The best option will depend on the number of bulbs you have.

The Larimer County Landfill provides a fee-based recycling option for “Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generators” of waste under its Business Hazardous Waste Assistance and Education Program. Contact the landfill to see if your business qualifies.

### Contact Information

#### Fort Collins Utilities

Call: (970) 221-6700

TDD: (970) 224-6003

Web: [fcgov.com/powerertosave](http://fcgov.com/powerertosave)

E-mail: [powerertosave@fcgov.com](mailto:powerertosave@fcgov.com)

#### Larimer County Landfill

Call: (970) 498-5773

Web: [www.co.larimer.co.us/solidwaste/haz.htm](http://www.co.larimer.co.us/solidwaste/haz.htm)

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