

The Matter Of Mercury - CFLs do contain about 5 milligrams of mercury - an element that, if breathed and absorbed by the body, can cause neurological damage. Mercury is an essential, irreplaceable element in CFLs and is what allows the bulb to be an efficient light source. By comparison, older home thermometers contain 500 milligrams of mercury, and many manual thermostats contain up to 3,000 milligrams. It would take between 100 and 600 CFLs to equal those amounts. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy assure that CFLs are safe to use in your home. No mercury is released when the bulbs are in use, and they pose no danger to you or your family when used properly. However, CFLs are made of glass tubing and can break if dropped or roughly handled. Be careful when removing the lamp from its packaging, installing it or replacing it.

Proper CFL Handling And Disposal - Due to the mercury content in CFLs, consumers must be sure to properly dispose of CFLs as they would paint, batteries, thermostats and other hazardous household items. **DO NOT THROW CFLs AWAY IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD**

GARBAGE IF BETTER OPTIONS EXIST. Because there is such a small amount of mercury in CFLs, your greatest risk if a bulb breaks is getting cut from glass shards. Research indicates that there is no immediate health risk to you or your family should a bulb break and it's cleaned up properly. You can minimize any risks by following these proper clean-up and disposal guidelines:

- Sweep up - don't vacuum - all of the glass fragments and fine particles.
- Place broken pieces in a sealed plastic bag, and wipe the area with a damp paper towel to pick up any stray shards of glass or fine particles. Put the used towel in the plastic bag as well.
- If weather permits, open windows to allow the room to ventilate.

Following are links to Web sites that provide more information about the proper use and disposal of compact fluorescent light bulbs. These resources also further address the issue of mercury and mercury content in CFLs.

www.earth911.org

www.lamprecycle.org

www.nema.org/lamprecycle/epafactsheet-cfl.pdf

www.eneregystar.gov