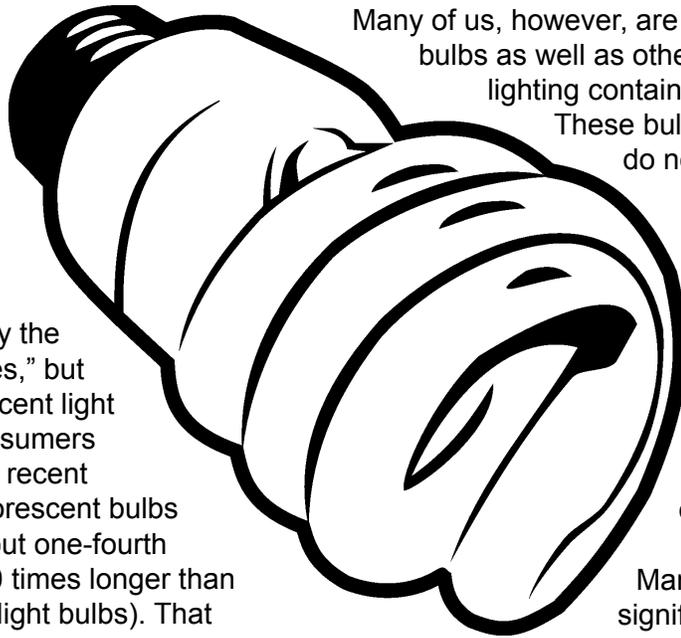




Fluorescent bulbs require special care.

You see them everywhere ... in businesses, schools, offices and homes. Fluorescent lighting is a common fixture thanks in part to its energy efficiency and long-term cost savings.

Most of us are familiar with fluorescent light bulbs – not only the common 4-foot and 8-foot “tubes,” but also the newer compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). In fact, many consumers have switched to using CFLs in recent years. Most of us know that fluorescent bulbs are energy efficient – using about one-fourth the energy and lasting about 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs (traditional light bulbs). That efficiency saves energy and money.



Many of us, however, are unaware that fluorescent bulbs as well as other types of energy-efficient lighting contain mercury – which is toxic.

These bulbs are safe to use and do not release mercury while intact. When broken, compacted, crushed or disposed of improperly, however, fluorescent bulbs may release mercury into the air, water and soil posing a significant risk to human health and the environment.

Manufacturers have taken significant steps to reduce the mercury content of fluorescent

light bulbs. For example, many brands of CFLs contain less than 5 milligrams (mg) of mercury (compared to older household thermometers that contain about 500 mg of mercury). In addition, manufacturers of some fluorescent tubes have introduced “green” tip bulbs. While they typically contain less mercury than standard fluorescent tubes, they still contain mercury. With this being the case, all fluorescent light bulbs should be recycled.

The Home Depot and Lowe's offer CFL recycling programs.

The Home Depot offers a free compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) recycling program at all of its U.S. locations. At each store, customers can bring in any unbroken CFL and give it to the store associate at the returns desk for recycling. To find a store near you, visit www.homedepot.com.

Lowe's also offers a free CFL recycling program at nearly 1,700 stores throughout the United States. At participating locations, customers can bring unbroken CFLs to the recycling center found inside the store entrance. Visit www.lowes.com to find a store near you.

Cleaning Up Broken Fluorescent Bulbs

When a fluorescent bulb breaks, mercury vapor may be released. To minimize exposure to the vapor, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provides step-by-step instructions for the proper cleanup and disposal of broken fluorescent bulbs at www.scdhec.gov/environment/admin/Mercury/htm/spills_fluorescent.htm.

Recycling Fluorescent Bulbs

Consumers should take advantage of recycling options for fluorescent light bulbs where available. Residents in some communities can recycle them through their local recycling programs. Other communities may hold single-day collection events. For more information, contact your local recycling coordinator or solid waste director. To identify your local recycling program contact, visit www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/recycle/counties.htm or call the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's (DHEC) Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling (Office) at **1-800-768-7348**. In addition, there are several companies in South Carolina that recycle fluorescent bulbs. For more information on these companies, visit www.scdhec.gov/recycle and click on RECYCLING MARKETS in the lower right-hand corner.

Businesses are different. They may, in fact, be required by law to recycle their fluorescent bulbs or treat them as hazardous waste. Businesses must follow all state and federal regulations regarding the proper management of fluorescent bulbs. Call DHEC's Division of Compliance and Enforcement at **(803) 896-4136** for information on applicable hazardous waste regulations.

The Office has prepared two fact sheets to assist businesses in the proper management of fluorescent bulbs. The Technical Assistance Fact Sheet "Proper Management of Universal Waste Lamps" can be found at www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/recycle/pubs/uw_lamps.pdf. The Best Management Practices "Fluorescent Bulb Recycling" Sheet can be found at www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/recycle/pubs/sb_fluorescent.pdf.



Office of Solid Waste
Reduction & Recycling
1-800-768-7348 • www.scdhec.gov/recycle

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