

Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL) Disposal Fact sheet

Many households have realised the energy savings of compact fluorescent lamps and are now minimising energy use by replacing incandescent bulbs with CFLs. Some of these CFLs are now coming to the end of their working life and householders are faced with the decision of how to dispose of them responsibly and safely.



Where do I dispose of a fluorescent lamp when I replace it?

At present, many fluorescent lamps are being disposed of in regular waste bin. The preferred method of disposal is to drop off your fluorescent lamps at one of Council's Resource Recovery Centres or Transfer Stations. The charge per lamp or fluorescent tube for this service is \$1 domestic and \$2 for commercial. This is to cover the costs incurred by Council to recycle these items in an environmentally responsible way.

Can I recycle fluorescent lamps?

Yes - by taking fluorescent lamps to your local Council Resource Recovery or Transfer Station, you are ensuring these products do not cause harm to our environment, remain out of landfill and are recycled responsibly.

Businesses with large volumes of fluorescent lamps can have them collected and recycled by private companies. For a list of companies visit PlanetArk's website Recycling Near You www.recyclingnearyou.com.au or www.businessrecycling.com.au

Do not place CFLs in the recycling bin, as they can break and contaminate other recyclables, and cause potential health hazards for sorting staff at the Materials Recovery Facility.

What does Council do with the fluorescent lamps they receive?

An approved contractor is engaged by Council to collect the fluorescent lamps for further processing and recycling. The components found in fluorescent lamps are processed and recycled in an environmentally responsible manner using specialised crush and separation technology.

Components include mercury, aluminium, phosphor powder and glass.

- Mercury is distilled from the separated powders and reused in the manufacture of dental amalgams.
- Aluminium from the tube ends is separated and recycled into cast products such as ingots used in foundry applications.
- Phosphor powder is used in the manufacture of fertiliser products for the agriculture industry.
- Glass is separated and recycled into glass wool used for home insulation.



How do I clean up a broken fluorescent lamp?

To reduce the risk of exposure, follow these simple steps for clean up and disposal of a broken fluorescent lamp:

1. Open nearby windows and doors to allow room to ventilate for at least 15 minutes as soon as possible after the lamp is broken. Switch off and close any ventilation or air conditioners that will recirculate mercury vapours. If inside, close doors to other nearby rooms while leaving doors and windows to the outside open.
2. Wearing dense-soled shoes, disposable rubber gloves and using a damp disposable cloth or brush, sweep up glass and debris carefully either into a disposable glass jar with metal lid, or onto stiff cardboard or paper.
3. Use sticky tape or a damp cloth; wipe up any remaining fragments of material.
4. Dispose of all materials used to clean up in the rubbish bin only. Do not place anything used to clean up in the recycling bin.
5. When cleaning up a broken fluorescent lamp:
 - (a) Do not attempt to vacuum or sweep large fragments or powders up, this will spread the mercury further.
 - (b) Do not pick up or touch the pieces with bare hands or immediately after the break, particularly if the CFL was in use.
 - (c) Always wear protective shoes when cleaning up broken glass.

Do fluorescent lamps contain mercury?

Yes, all fluorescent lamps, including CFLs, contain very small amounts of mercury which is fundamental to their energy efficiency. Ordinary fluorescent tubes currently contain approximately 15mg (0.015 of a gram) of mercury. In comparison, old mercury thermometers contain approximately 500mg of mercury, over 30 times the content of current CFLs.

As energy efficient lighting becomes more popular, it is important that we dispose of the products safely and responsibly. Mercury is released into our environment when products with mercury are broken, disposed of improperly, or incinerated. If you break a CFL, clean it up safely using the guidelines provided and always dispose of it responsibly.



Always hold fluorescent lamps by the base and not the glass tubing.

Where do I find more information?

The Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency has further information regarding CFLs and mercury. www.climatechange.gov.au

Disclaimer: Whilst all efforts have been made to ensure that the content of this fact sheet is free from error, Council does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of the information. Council does not accept any liability for any person, for any damage or loss whatsoever or howsoever caused in relation to that person taking action (or not taking action as the case may be) in respect of any statement, information or advice given in this fact sheet.

Current as at July 2022

Sunshine Coast Council
www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
 mail@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
 T 07 5475 7272 F 07 5475 7277
 Locked Bag 72 Sunshine Coast Mail Centre Qld 4560