

COMPACT FLUORESCENT LIGHT BULBS (CFL)

While CFLs help save energy and the environment, they also contain a very small amount (about the size of a pen point) of mercury. Should a CFL break at home, do not panic. Proper clean-up is easy.

⇒ First, keep infants, children, pregnant women and pets out of the room. And, if you are pregnant, do not do the clean-up yourself.

⇒ Next, turn off forced hot air, central air and fans. Close the door and open windows in the room. Leave the room for at least 15 minutes to air out to room before clean-up.

INITIAL CLEANUP PROCEDURE:

1. Put on disposable gloves and carefully pick up all large pieces of glass. Put them in a zip-lock bag.
2. Using index cards or stiff paper, push the bits of glass, powder, and other debris into small piles. Carefully lift each pile and place into zip-lock bags. [not for carpet or rug clean-up]
3. Use sticky tape to pat the remaining debris.
4. Shine a bright flashlight to look for glittering bits of glass or mercury. Pat the area with sticky tape again until you do not see any more glittering with the flashlight and put used tape into zip-lock bags.
5. Pat the area with damp paper towels or rags to further clean-up debris. Put the used paper towels, rags, and gloves in the zip-lock bag.
6. Put the zip-lock bags in an outdoor trashcan immediately.
7. Wash your hands and face after the waste has been removed from the house.
8. Continue to ventilate the room.



The small amount of mercury inside of a CFL can penetrate carpets and continue emit vapors at very low levels for a long time, even after the initial cleanup. Consider removing the section of carpet or area rug where the breakage occurred, especially if children or pregnant women frequently use this room.

Carefully roll up the rug and place it in a large plastic bag. Put it in an outdoor trashcan or take it to your local dump. If you will be transporting it to the dump in your vehicle, keep it outside until you make the trip. Make sure the rug is wrapped in plastic so it cannot contaminate your vehicle.

If a CFL breaks on a soft surface like an upholstered couch, chair, or bed, follow the initial cleanup procedure. When finished, you may want to consider placing the item outdoors (in the sunlight, if possible) to air out for several hours.

ON-GOING CLEANING PROCEDURE

For the next several regular cleanings in the room where the CFL broke, follow the directions below:

1. Keep infants, children, pregnant women and pets out of the room. Also turn off forced hot air heat, central air and fans before vacuuming, and open the windows to ventilate the room.
2. After vacuuming the carpet or rug, the vacuum cleaner may contain a small amount of mercury. Therefore, remove the vacuum bag and place it into a zip-lock or sealable plastic bag.
3. If using a bagless vacuum, empty the collection cup into a zip-lock bag and wipe the inside of the cup with a damp paper towel or rag. Put the used paper towels/rags into zip-lock bags for disposal.
4. When you are finished with the clean-up, immediately put the zip-lock bags in an outdoor trashcan. Getting the waste out of the house right away is an important safety step.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



GREENWICH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Environmental Services
622-7838
M-F 8am–4pm



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
www.dph.state.ct.us/
Environmental Health Section
Environmental & Occupational Health
Assessment Program
410 Capitol Avenue, MS # 11EOH
Hartford, CT 06134-0308
Tel: (860) 509-7740, Fax: (860) 509-7785



US EPA
www.epa.gov/iaq 1-800-438-4318
National Response Center 1-800-424-8802



US FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
24-hr hotline for methylmercury in fish
1-800-SAFE-FOOD

CT POISON CONTROL CENTER
1-800-343-2722

CT DEPT. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
(Emergency spills, 24 hrs/day)
860-424-3338

TOWN OF GREENWICH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

101 Field Point Road
Greenwich, CT 06830
Phone: 203-622-6488
www.greenwichct.org

MERCURY

Protect your family
from exposure



Division Of Environmental Services

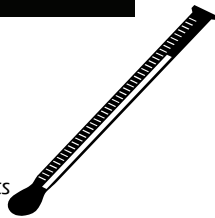
WHAT IS MERCURY

Mercury (Hg) is a silver-gray liquid metal that is found in air, water and soil. Mercury is a hazardous chemical that can cause serious health problems. It can linger indoors for months or even years and slowly evaporate into the air. Its vapors cannot be seen or smelled, but breathing them can cause harmful effects.

Human activities – such as burning fossil fuels and hazardous waste, and the improper disposal of mercury containing products – have greatly increased the amount of mercury contamination in the environment.

WHERE IS MERCURY FOUND?

- ◆ Fluorescent light bulbs
- ◆ Glass thermometers
- ◆ Some older light switches
- ◆ Older household thermostats
- ◆ Some metallic jewelry
- ◆ Children's shoes (with flickering lights)
- ◆ Some toys with flashing lights
- ◆ Clothing irons
- ◆ Some clock pendulums
- ◆ Older oil-based paints
- ◆ Button (watch-type) batteries
- ◆ Some utility devices, such as pressure control units attached to gas meters
- ◆ Certain types of fish contain mercury in a form known as methylmercury. Eating these fish will cause mercury to be absorbed in the body.



DANGERS OF MERCURY

When mercury is not contained properly, its vapors get into the air. Breathing the vapors will cause most of the mercury to be absorbed in your body. Mercury can also be absorbed through the skin. As well, when swallowed, small amounts of liquid mercury is absorbed into your blood.

Mercury vapor is especially dangerous because it can get into carpets, curtains, furniture and cracks in the floor. It can stay there for months or years, slowly letting off more vapors.

Unborn and young children are especially susceptible to mercury exposure because their nervous systems are still developing. Whether it is absorbed through the skin, inhaled or ingested, exposure to mercury should be taken very seriously.

Mercury can cause permanent damage to your brain and nervous system, resulting in behavioral or learning problems. It may take a long time for noticeable symptoms to develop. These include:

- ◆ Nausea
- ◆ Abdominal cramps
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Eye irritation
- ◆ Loss of appetite
- ◆ Fatigue
- ◆ Insomnia
- ◆ Weight loss
- ◆ Skin rashes
- ◆ Muscle tremors



If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to mercury or have symptoms of mercury poisoning, contact your physician immediately. A doctor can test for and prescribe treatments to remove the mercury.

IF THERE'S A SPILL

All mercury spills, regardless of size, should be cleaned up immediately and carefully. If the amount spilled is greater than two tablespoons, contact the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802. If a spill is less than two tablespoons:

Do ...keep all pets and children away from the immediate area.

Do ...wear rubber or latex gloves when cleaning up a spill.

Do ...use cardboard, a squeegee or an eyedropper to gather and draw up mercury.

Do ...properly ventilate the spill area.

Do ...put clean-up materials in a sealable container.

Don't ...use a vacuum cleaner or a broom to clean up mercury.

Don't ...pour mercury down the drain

Don't ...wash mercury-contaminated items in the washing machine.

Don't ...walk around – your shoes could be covered with mercury.



Remember to save all old and unused mercury-containing items for proper disposal at the Town of Greenwich Household Hazardous Waste day.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ◆ Mercury is a naturally occurring liquid metal
- ◆ In its gaseous state mercury is colorless and odorless
- ◆ A broken thermometer is the most common exposure to liquid mercury
- ◆ Mercury salts are used in some skin-lightening creams, antiseptic creams and ointments
- ◆ Mercury is a toxic substance that is very harmful to humans
- ◆ 41 states, including California have issued fish-consumption advisories due to mercury contamination
- ◆ Larger fish have higher concentrations of mercury than small fish



PROPER STORAGE AND DISPOSAL

Proper storage and disposal of mercury-containing products will greatly reduce the risk of exposure in your home. Store products containing mercury in a safe place, preferably outdoors in unbreakable, disposable containers.