

## Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs

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A provision in the 2007 energy bill requires light bulbs to be 30% more energy-efficient starting in 2012—a standard that will phase out incandescent bulbs. But why wait? Today's compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) already use 50 to 80% less energy than incandescent bulbs. If every U.S. household replaced just one incandescent bulb with a CFL, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates we would reduce global warming pollution by an amount equivalent to taking more than 800,000 cars off the road. Most CFLs available today offer the same performance, versatility, and light output as incandescent bulbs. Look for the following product information:

**Whiteness:** Like incandescent bulbs, CFLs can produce light in many shades of white, from cool to warm.

**Brightness:** Because CFLs use less energy (as measured in watts) to produce the same amount of light as an incandescent bulb, look for lumens (a measure of light output) on the product label to find CFLs that will match or exceed the brightness of the incandescent bulbs you've been using. E.g., a 60-watt incandescent bulb and a 15-watt CFL each produce about 800 lumens.

**Compatibility:** CFLs are available in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, for both standard and smaller sockets, and designed to accommodate three-way, dimmable, motion-sensor, and outdoor fixtures.

CFLs last up to 10 times as long as incandescent bulbs, but because frequent on/off cycles can reduce their useful life, target high-usage areas of your home first (that is, where lights stay on for long periods of time). This will ensure you get the most energy savings right away.

**CFLs and Mercury:** CFLs do contain a small amount of mercury, so they cannot be thrown out in the trash. However, the mercury in CFLs represents a much less significant environmental hazard than incandescent bulbs because CFLs require much less electricity, and more than half of our nation's electricity is generated by coal-fired power plants—the largest U.S. source of mercury emissions.

In other words, the average coal-fired power plant emits only 3.2 milligrams of mercury for each CFL running six hours per day for five years, but emits nearly 15 milligrams of mercury for an incandescent bulb running the same amount of time. The difference far exceeds the approximately five milligrams present inside a CFL. Properly disposing of CFLs ensures the mercury in them remains contained.

### How should I clean up a broken fluorescent bulb?

1. Open a window and leave the room for 15 minutes or more.
2. *Do not use a vacuum or broom to clean up the broken bulb on hard surfaces.* Carefully scoop up the fragments and powder with stiff paper or cardboard and place them all in a sealed plastic bag. Use disposable rubber gloves, if available (i.e., do not use bare hands). Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes and place them in the plastic bag.
3. Place all cleanup materials in a second sealed plastic bag. Place the first bag in a second sealed plastic bag and put it in the outdoor trash container or in another outdoor protected area for the next normal trash disposal. Wash your hands after disposing of the bag.  
*Note:* some states prohibit such trash disposal and require that broken and unbroken bulbs be taken to a local recycling center.
4. If a fluorescent bulb breaks on a rug or carpet: First, remove all materials you can without using a vacuum cleaner, following the steps above. Sticky tape (such as duct tape) can be used to pick up small pieces and powder. If vacuuming is needed, vacuum the area where the bulb was broken, remove the vacuum bag (or empty and wipe the canister) and put the bag or vacuum debris in two sealed plastic bags in the outdoor trash.

### Recycling Options:

Bring spent, unbroken CFLs to Home Depot or Ikea. There's no fee, and the stores will accept any CFLs. Some Ace Hardware stores also collect CFLs. Your local Household Hazardous Waste collection site may accept CFLs.

### For more information:

[http://ucsaction.org/ucsaction/noticedescription.tcl?newsletter\\_id=21645175](http://ucsaction.org/ucsaction/noticedescription.tcl?newsletter_id=21645175)  
[www.EnergyStar.gov](http://www.EnergyStar.gov) FAQs [EarthEasy](http://www.EarthEasy.org) [National Electrical Manufacturers Association](http://www.NationalElectricalManufacturersAssociation.org)—  
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