

How to dispose of energy efficient lightbulbs (CFLs)

Energy efficient lightbulbs are up to 80% more efficient than traditional bulbs, which can lose up to 95% of their energy as heat. Energy efficient bulbs are becoming more common place since the ban on the sale of incandescent lightbulbs came into force on 1 September 2009.

Low-energy or energy efficient light bulbs also known as Compact Florescent Lamps, contain small amounts of mercury and therefore they must be disposed of sensibly in facilities that are fit for purpose, which is not the domestic waste bin. However there is only about 5mg of mercury per lamp and it cannot escape from a lamp that is intact. Even if the bulb breaks, it is unlikely to cause harm: energy efficient light bulbs are not a danger to the public.

CFLs are subject to the requirements of the [WEEE Regulations](#). This means retailers of CFLs must provide information to the public about disposal of the items. Some retailers, provide an in-store take back service, for example [Sainsbury's](#) and [Ikea](#), though most have instead funded Designated Collection Facilities when you can take your used CFLs.

Designated Collection Facilities are usually the local authority Household Waste Recycling Centre. To find your nearest site that will accept CFLs, visit www.recyclenmore.co.uk and enter your postcode into the postcode locator. This service is only available for householders. If you are a business with CFLs to recycle visit <http://www.recycle-more.co.uk/nav/page1844.aspx> or contact Valpak on 08450 682572.

If you do accidentally break a CFL, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) provides the following guidance on what to do:

1. Take care to prevent injury from broken glass.
2. Vacate the room and keep children and pets out of the affected area. Shut off central air conditioning system, if you have one.
3. Ventilate the room by opening the windows for at least 15 minutes before clean up.
4. Do not use a vacuum cleaner, but clean up using rubber gloves and aim to avoid creating and inhaling airborne dust as much as possible.
5. On hard surfaces sweep up all particles and glass fragments with stiff cardboard and place everything, including the cardboard, in a plastic bag. Wipe the area with a damp cloth and then add that to the bag. Household cleaning products should be avoided during clean up despite the very small amount of mercury involved. See the next section for cleaning carpeted surfaces.
6. Use sticky tape to pick up small residual CFL pieces or powder from soft furnishings and then add that to the bag.
7. The plastic bag should be reasonably sturdy and needs to be sealed, but it does not need to be air tight. The sealed plastic bag should be double-bagged to minimise cuts from broken glass.
8. The bags can then be disposed of through your local council. Visit the NHHWF's Chemical Disposal Service Finder at www.chem-away.org.uk to find your nearest civic amenity site or household waste recycling centre.