

The Home Depot CFL Recycling Program – FAQs

1. Why is it important to recycle CFLs rather than throwing them in the municipal trash?

CFL bulbs should not be disposed of with regular household waste because they contain a small amount of mercury. Recycling CFLs ensures we are protecting both human health and the environment.

2. How are we making sure our associates and the public aren't exposed to mercury?

No mercury is released when the bulbs are intact or in use, but as a precaution, consumers should return unbroken CFL bulbs in a ziplock bag. In addition, containers where bulbs are stored must remain closed when not in use. All Home Depot store associates undergo training in how to manage universal waste, which include CFLs. THD has also contracted with a licensed environmental management company who will coordinate CFL packaging, transportation and recycling to maximize safety and ensure environmental compliance.

3. What is the process if a bulb is broken in the store?

All Home Depot store associates undergo training in what to do in the event of fluorescent lamp breakage. Store associates are trained to isolate the area surrounding the broken bulb from customers and other associates. Designated associates within the store undergo additional waste management training and follow specific guidelines for cleaning up broken CFL bulbs.

4. What ultimately happens to the CFLs?

Our third-party environmental management company follows all environmental and government guidelines for the disposal/recycling of household hazardous waste. The bulbs are broken down into their respective parts of glass, phosphor powder and mercury. The glass and mercury are then sold by the recyclers as commodities.

5. Are all parts of the CFLs recycled or does anything enter a landfill?

The phosphor powder is currently the only component that is not recycled and ships to a landfill. Our environmental management company is currently working with recyclers to come up with viable options to recycle or reuse the phosphor powder.

6. Is the plastic bag the bulbs are placed in recycled as well?

The plastic bags are recycled unless there is contamination in which case they must be sent for retort where any residual mercury is captured and then recycled.

7. Do you take back all fluorescent lighting, or just CFLs?

No. This program was developed for the convenience of our customers to recycle household CFL bulbs. We do not currently accept fluorescent linear tubes.

8. Are CFLs safe to use, despite this possible risk?

The Home Depot is committed to the safety of our customers and communities in which we operate. We have sold compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) since 1993. The majority of the bulbs we sell contain between 2.3 mg - 3.5 mg of mercury, which is much lower than the 5 mg recommended by The National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA). All of the Energy Star-rated CFLs we offer meet our Eco Options standards that help consumers identify products that have less of an impact on the environment.

9. How much does the CFL recycling cost for The Home Depot?

The Home Depot is covering all costs associated with CFL packaging, transportation and recycling. However, we do not disclose specific financials of the program.