



Safety Tip of the Week

Protect Yourself from Mercury in Fluorescent Bulbs

There are dangers inherent in working with or around tubular and compact fluorescent bulbs. These kinds of bulbs contain small amounts of metal mercury sealed inside. Metallic mercury poses health risks from both skin exposure/contact and inhalation of mercury vapor into the lungs.

Metal mercury is liquid at room temperature but can easily evaporate from a liquid to a vapor. The vaporous form of metal mercury is colorless, odorless, and extremely hazardous. If these bulbs break, it is important to follow safe cleanup precautions, which include evacuation, ventilation, and proper remediation and disposal.



Safe Storage and Clean-Up

It is very important to package fluorescent bulbs in adequately padded (sturdy) packaging, store them in closed containers in an area away from activity and workers, and handle the bulbs carefully when it is time to replace them. If a break does occur, it is important to take significant precautions to reduce worker exposure to metallic mercury (liquid and vapors). Remember the following to stay safe:

- The area should be cleared of personnel and ventilated;
- A broom or vacuum should NEVER be used unless it is designed to collect mercury;
- Use a piece of cardboard to scoop up pieces of glass and powder;
- Avoid contact with broken glass;
- Use appropriate disposable chemical-resistant gloves when cleaning;
- Wipe down the area well after cleanup; and
- Dispose of the pieces in a sealed plastic bag or glass jar with lid according to EPA and state government regulations for mercury-contaminated waste.

MERCURY VAPOR...SILENT BUT DANGEROUS!