



Department of Environmental Protection

One Winter Street Boston, MA 02108 • 617-292-5500

Guidance: Cleaning Up Broken Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFLs)

The following guidance provides instructions for cleaning up a broken compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL). Following these steps will protect you and others from possible cuts from broken glass and from potential exposure to mercury vapors that can be released when a CFL breaks.

DO NOT USE A VACUUM OR BROOM TO CLEAN UP A BROKEN CFL

1. Children, pregnant women and pets should stay away from the area until you complete the cleanup.
2. Being careful not to step in the area where the bulb broke, if feasible, open windows or doors to the outdoors to ventilate. If you have a fan, use it to blow air directly out the window. Leave the area for 15 minutes prior to cleaning up the broken bulb. Close any interior doors to the area.
3. To clean up the broken CFL, use disposable gloves if available (do not use your bare hands). If you do not have disposable gloves, cover your hands with a plastic bag or use a paper towel to protect your hands from broken glass.
4. Using stiff paper (index cards, thin cardboard) carefully scoop up the CFL fragments and any visible powder, being careful not to get them on your clothing. Place the collected fragments into a disposable container that the broken glass will not rip, such as an empty rigid plastic food container or brown paper bag.
5. Using sticky tape, like duct, packing or masking tape, pick up any small particles of the broken CFL. Go over the area, pressing the tape onto the surface, even if you do not see any pieces or powder. Place the used tape into the disposable container.
6. Using wet wipes or moist paper towels, wipe the area to pick up any residual glass and powder and place used towels and disposable gloves into the disposable container.
7. Place the disposable container into a plastic bag that you can tie off at the top (to keep the contents inside) and take it out to an outdoor trash bin right away.
8. Even after cleanup of a broken bulb, some mercury that you cannot see may remain in carpeting. If the carpet is in an area where young children or pregnant women may be exposed, it is advisable to cut out and replace the section of the carpet where the breakage occurred in order to remove any residual mercury.
9. Ventilate the room to the outdoors for several hours after the cleanup, if possible, to ensure mercury vapors have cleared. If available, continue to use a fan to blow air out the window.
10. Keep children and pets away from the spot where the CFL broke for several days.

Should you have further questions, you may call MassDEP at 617-292-5500. Health-related questions may also be directed to the DPH Bureau of Environmental Health at 617-624-5757.