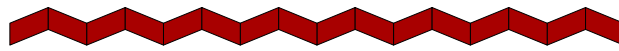




What to Do if a Fluorescent Light Bulb Breaks



Office of Safety and Security Fact Sheet

The amount of mercury contained in a fluorescent light tube is very small, not microscopic, but barely larger than what would fit on the head of a pin (see photo to right). Additionally, the mercury from a broken bulb is mostly in vapor form, so when a light bulb breaks, the likelihood of there being any amount of visible mercury present is extremely remote. You should be more concerned about mercury vapor in the air, which can be easily dissipated. The most effective way to protect students and staff from a possible mercury exposure due to a broken fluorescent light bulb is to remove staff and students from the room, properly clean up the broken glass, and more importantly, ventilate the room with fresh outside air.



The following are some Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommendations for proper and safe clean-up and disposal of a broken fluorescent light bulb.

- **Before Clean-up: Ventilate the Room**

Have **ALL STAFF AND STUDENTS** leave the room, and don't let anyone walk through the breakage area on their way out. Open a window and leave the room for at least 20 minutes or more.

***The following steps should only be completed only after
Ventilating the room for at least 20 minutes***

- **Clean-Up Steps for Hard Surfaces**

- Always use rubber gloves to protect your hands from the sharp glass.
- Carefully remove the large pieces of glass and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag.
- Carefully scoop up smaller glass pieces and powder using stiff paper or cardboard and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag.
- Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder.
- Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place towels in the glass jar or plastic bag.
- Place rubber gloves in the glass jar or plastic bag.
- Wash your hands.
- **Do not use a vacuum or broom to clean up the broken bulb on hard surfaces.**



- **Clean-up Steps for Carpeting or Rug**
 - Always use rubber gloves to protect your hands from the sharp glass.
 - Carefully pick up glass fragments and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag.
 - Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder.
 - Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place towels in the glass jar or plastic bag.
 - Place rubber gloves in the glass jar or plastic bag.
 - If the rug is an area rug and can be removed from the room, do so and allow rug to air outside (dependent on weather).
 - If vacuuming is needed after all visible materials are removed, 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 a sealed plastic bag.
 - Throw away the bag.

- **Clean-up Steps for Clothing, Bedding, Upholstered Furniture and Other Soft Materials**
 - If clothing or bedding materials come in direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from inside the bulb that may stick to the fabric, the clothing or bedding should be thrown away. Do not wash such clothing or bedding because mercury fragments in the clothing may contaminate the machine and/or pollute sewage.
 - If upholstered furniture comes in direct contact with broken glass or mercury containing powder from inside the bulb, follow the steps for carpeting or rugs.
 - Always use rubber gloves to protect your hands from the sharp glass.
 - Carefully pick up glass fragments and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag.
 - Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder.
 - Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place towels in the glass jar or plastic bag.
 - Place rubber gloves in the glass jar or plastic bag.
 - If the piece of furniture can be easily removed from the room, do so and allow the furniture to air outside (dependent on weather).
 - If vacuuming is needed after all visible materials are removed, 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 a sealed plastic bag.
 - Throw away the bag.
 - You can, however, wash clothing or other materials that have been exposed to the mercury vapor from a broken CFL, such as the clothing you are wearing when you cleaned up the broken CFL, as long as that clothing has not come into direct contact with the materials from the broken bulb.
 - If shoes come into direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from the bulb, wipe them off with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place the towels or wipes in a glass jar or plastic bag for disposal.

- **Disposal of Clean-up Materials**
 - Immediately place all clean-up materials outdoors in a trash container (dumpster) for the next normal trash pickup.
 - Broken bulbs are not to be placed in the fluorescent tube recycling transport box.
 - Wash your hands after disposing of the jars or plastic bags containing clean-up materials.

If you need any other additional information please consult your cluster monitor or the Office of Safety and Security at 571-423-2010.