



Disposal Procedure for Broken Fluorescent Lamps

Fluorescent lights work by exciting a phosphorous coating within the tube to emit light. This process requires very small amounts of mercury sealed within the glass tubing. The average mercury content of a 4-foot- long lamp manufactured in 2004 is 12mg. Mercury is an essential, irreplaceable element in a Fluorescent Lamp and is what allows the lamp to be an efficient light source. There is currently no substitute for mercury in a Fluorescent Lamp; however, manufactures are now producing low mercury lamps, containing 4 mg or less. These lamps are identified with green tips or green printing on them.

Because there is such a small amount of mercury in a Fluorescent Lamp, the greatest hazard exposure is from getting cut by glass shards. Research indicates that there is no immediate health risk to people should a lamp break and it's cleaned up properly.

You can minimize any risks by following these proper clean-up and disposal guidelines for broken lamps.

How should I clean up a broken Green and Silver Tip fluorescent lamp?

Because Fluorescent Lamps contain a small amount of mercury, the following clean-up and disposal guidelines apply:

1. Before Clean-up: Ventilate the Room

- Open a window, and don't let anyone walk through the breakage area.

2. Clean-Up Steps for Hard Surfaces

- Carefully scoop up glass fragments and powder using stiff paper or cardboard and place them in a sealable container or in a sealable plastic bag.
- Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder. Be careful not to get cut by any of the glass fragments.
- Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes and place them in the container or plastic bag. If using a plastic bag, place first bag in a second plastic bag as an added precaution.
- Do not use a vacuum or broom to clean up the broken lamp on hard surfaces.

3. Clean-up Steps for Carpeting or Rug:

- Carefully pick up glass fragments and place them in a sealable container or in a sealable plastic bag.
- Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder.



- If vacuuming is needed after all visible materials are removed, vacuum the area where the lamp was broken.
- The vacuum bag or vacuum debris can be placed in the regular garbage.

4. Clean-up Steps for Clothing, Bedding, etc.:

- If clothing or bedding materials come in direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from inside the lamp that may stick to the fabric, the clothing or bedding should be discarded. Do not wash such clothing or bedding because mercury fragments in the clothing may contaminate the machine and/or pollute sewage.
- You can, however, wash clothing or other materials that have been exposed to the mercury vapor from a broken fluorescent lamp, such as the clothing you happened to be wearing when you cleaned up the broken fluorescent lamp, as long as that clothing has not come into direct contact with the materials from the broken lamp.
- If shoes come into direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from the lamp, wipe them off with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place the towels or wipes in a sealable container or in a sealable plastic bag for disposal.

5. Disposal of Clean-up Materials

Place all cleanup materials into two, separate plastic bags (referred to as double –bagging) or other sealed container, for disposal through Environmental Health & Safety. Mark the bag or container with “Hazardous Waste”, Broken Fluorescent Lamp Waste, and Date. Place near a collection site for Batteries and Aerosol Cans or call Environmental Health & Safety (570) 577-3337 to have it removed from your location

- Wash your hands after disposing of the jars or plastic bags containing clean-up materials.

6. Future Cleaning of Carpeting or Rug: Ventilate the Room During and After Vacuuming

- The next several times you vacuum the carpet, open windows if possible.