

Facts about mercury in CFLs

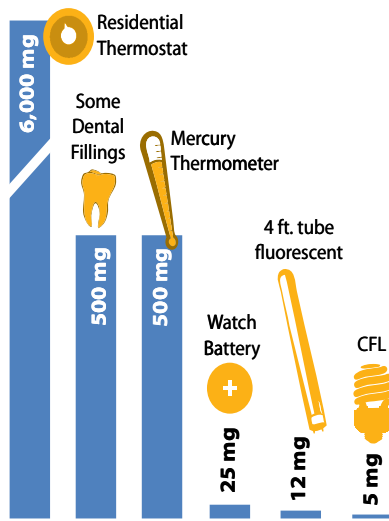
Ads and packaging materials for compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) proclaim that they use much less energy and last much longer than standard incandescent bulbs. However, if you read the fine print on the packaging or find the notice on the base of each bulb, you'll see that it contains mercury.

While that may raise an alarm in your mind, there's no need to worry. The amount of mercury inside the glass tubes of an average CFL is minuscule—about the equivalent of the tip of a ballpoint pen and it's especially small when compared to other items you may have around your home.

The amount of mercury in a CFL runs about 4-5 milligrams (mg), while a glass fever thermometer contains 500 mg, and an old-style thermostat could contain up to 3,000 mg.

Comparing Mercury Content

Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) contain tiny amounts of mercury, and they're not alone. Many common household items also contain mercury. For recycling tips visit www.epa.gov/cfl.



Source: ENERGY STAR, Natural Resources Defense Council

CFLs are safe to handle and use in your home, and they release no mercury when in operation. Even if you break a CFL, the amount of mercury that may become airborne poses a very low risk of exposure, says ENERGY STAR. (To prevent breakage, carefully unpack a CFL, and always screw and unscrew the bulb by its base.) When CFLs burn out or break, the best course of action is to recycle them.

CFLs fall into the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) category of Household Hazardous Waste (HHW), but there's no federal (or North Carolina) requirement that the bulbs be recycled. There are several HHW recycling centers in our state—in Dare for example that accept CFLs. The Buxton Transfer Station, located at 47027 Buxton Back Rd, recycles CFL bulbs, but you must bring them in a sealed plastic bag.

To find out other facilities or stores near you that accepts CFLs, go to the Earth 911 website at www.earth911.org, or call 800-CLEANUP. Be sure to call the facility or store that's listed before you make the trip, to ensure that it allows homeowners or apartment dwellers to drop off CFLs.

If one of these recycling options is not available to you, you may put burned out or broken CFLs with your regular trash—but in no case should you burn or incinerate them.


CFLs are a great idea. They'll help you cut your utility bills, and they'll help reduce the need for electricity production. However, to create the maximum benefit for the environment, recycling burned-out and broken CFLs makes sense.

How to Clean Up a Broken Compact Fluorescent Lightbulb (CFL)



A CFL's glass tubing contains about 4 milligrams of mercury. While this isn't much (classic thermometers contained 500 milligrams) consumers should still take precautions if a CFL breaks.

- 1 Ventilate the room, then wait 5 to 10 minutes. 
- 2 Scoop up powder and glass fragments using stiff paper or cardboard. Seal in a plastic bag. 
- 3 Use duct tape to pick up any fragments or powder. 
- 4 Immediately place all materials used to clean up and the plastic bag in an outdoor trash container. Remember to wash your hands. 
- 5 Not all recycling centers accept broken CFLs. Check with your local and/or state waste authority for disposal requirements, or visit Earth911.com.

To learn more visit epa.gov/cflcleanup. 

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation, Environmental Protection Agency

Give the lineman a break...

To you he is just a lineman...someone to bring power back on during an outage.

To his family he is a husband, a father, a son or a brother.

To maintain or restore power, he works in all types of weather, day or night.

Give him a break. Be patient. Please slow down and drive with caution when you see parked utility service vehicles and linemen working.

Remember, utility service vehicles in North Carolina are now protected under the Move Over Law.

Thank You,
Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative



CHEC employees volunteer at local museum

Throughout the summer months, CHEC employees volunteer at the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras village. Each Friday, beginning in June, one CHEC employee oversees the welcome desk in the front of the museum and helps with general information and questions.

The GYOTA Museum is part of the North Carolina Maritime Museum System. Shipwrecks of the Outer Banks and maritime history, which

can be dated back as far as 1524, are on display inside. An estimated one million people pass through the museum each year.

August 2011 marked the 150th anniversary of the first Union victory of the Civil War, which happened on the Outer Banks. To celebrate, the GYOTA Museum hosted the "Flags Over Hatteras" conference. Three nationally recognized authors and historians, along with several local Hatteras Island historians all participated and presented during the three-day event. CHEC was a proud sponsor of the conference.

The Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum is located at 59200 Museum Drive in Hatteras. For more information about the museum, please visit www.graveyardoftheatlantic.com or call 252-986-2995.



CHEC office closed for Labor Day

CHEC will be closed LABOR DAY, September 5. For your convenience, local payments can be made using the CHEC office, 47109 Light Plant Road, front door entrance drop box. CHEC online payments can be made at www.chec.coop.



Cape Hatteras Highlights

Published by:
Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative
PO Box 9, 47109 Light Plant Road,
Buxton, NC 27920
Office Hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Phone: 252-995-5616
Toll Free: 800-454-5616
Outage Report: 866-511-9862
Fax: 252-995-4088
www.chec.coop

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