

Web Resources

- hennepin.us
Hennepin County – Information for residents on year-round drop-off facilities for household hazardous wastes, seasonal collection events, and how to reduce the amount and toxicity of household hazardous products in your home.
- www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/hhw-mercuryspills.pdf
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – More information on cleaning up spilled mercury in the home.
- www.energystar.gov
U.S. EPA and Department of Energy Energy Star Program – Information on how to save money and protect the environment through the use of energy efficient products and practices.
- www.xcelenergy.com/Residential/Programs_Resources/Pages/Programs_Resources.aspx
Xcel Energy – Information on programs and money-saving rebates and incentives available in this area.



Hennepin County
Environmental Services
612-348-3777

hennepin.us search: A to Z

Reducing waste and recycling more is making Hennepin a **COOL county.**

Attention..... If you want help translating this information, call 612-348-3777

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TDD/TTY 612-596-6985

Fluorescent light bulbs:

Buy them, use them, recycle them!



Using energy-efficient fluorescent light bulbs makes good sense—you save money on electric bills and help protect the environment. Because they contain mercury, fluorescent bulbs of all shapes and sizes must be recycled to avoid polluting the environment and posing a health threat. Even a small amount of mercury released into the environment is a concern. Never throw these bulbs in the trash, whether intact or broken—it is illegal to do so.



Fluorescent bulbs save money and help protect our environment

- A fluorescent bulb producing the same amount of light as an incandescent bulb uses about 75 percent less energy and lasts up to 10 times longer.
- Using a compact fluorescent bulb saves an average of \$30 in electricity costs over its lifetime and prevents the release of more than 450 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reducing your energy consumption with fluorescent lighting results in less mercury pollution, which is caused by using fossil fuels to produce electricity.

High intensity discharge lamps are sometimes used for outdoor lighting. These are not fluorescent, but contain mercury and must be recycled.



What to recycle

- Compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs of all sizes
- Fluorescent bulbs of all shapes and sizes (tubes, circles, U-shaped, bug “zappers”, tanning lamps and black lights)
- High intensity discharge (HID) lamps, typically used for exterior lighting (metal halide, mercury vapor and high pressure sodium)
- Neon lights

Where to recycle

Easy and convenient recycling options are available to households for CFL bulbs.

- **Retailers and hardware stores**
Ikea and all Home Depot and Menards stores offer free recycling for all brands of unbroken CFLs. Many hardware stores that sell all types of fluorescent light bulbs also collect them for recycling for a fee through Xcel Energy’s Budget Smart Bulb Recycling Program. Discount coupons are available at www.xcelenergy.com – go to Residential > Programs and Resources > Bulb Recycling.
- **Hennepin County**
The county accepts all types of fluorescent, high intensity discharge, neon bulbs and ballasts free of charge (up to 25 light bulbs per year) from households at drop-off facilities in Brooklyn Park and Bloomington. For more information visit hennepin.us/dropoffs or call 612-348-3777.

Handle with care

Be careful when handling and transporting fluorescent bulbs to avoid breakage and exposure to mercury.

- **Storing:** To avoid breaking bulbs, store them in their original packaging somewhere inaccessible to children.
- **Transporting:** When transporting fluorescent bulbs for recycling, repack them in their original packaging or wrap in newspaper or bubble wrap and place in a box or bag to prevent breakage. Carry them in the trunk of the car, if possible. Make sure there are no heavy items in the trunk that can shift or roll around and break the bulbs. As an added precaution, place used bulbs in sealed heavy-duty plastic bags.

Frequently asked questions

Fluorescent bulbs have mercury in them — why should I use them?

CFLs contain about 5 mg of mercury sealed inside of the glass tube. This is a very small amount, about the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen. Fluorescent light bulbs are safe to use because no mercury is released when the bulbs are in use. Simply be careful when removing or replacing a fluorescent bulb and make sure you recycle them.

The use of fluorescent bulbs actually prevents more mercury from being released into the air by power plants. A power plant emits about 10 mg of mercury to produce the electricity needed to run an incandescent bulb, compared to only 2.4 mg of mercury to run a compact fluorescent bulb for the same amount of time.

What should I do if a fluorescent bulb breaks?

Because of the mercury in fluorescent light bulbs, breaking a fluorescent bulb is not like breaking a regular light bulb.

If you break a fluorescent bulb, keep people and pets out of the room. Open the windows and exterior doors to vent the mercury vapor to the outside for 15 minutes before you clean up. Put on rubber gloves and carefully pick up the fragments, glass shards and any powder with sticky tape. Once you’ve picked up any visible pieces, you can vacuum. Place all the pieces and used clean-up materials (including the vacuum bag) in a plastic bag and seal it. Bring the sealed bag to a Hennepin County Drop-off Facility for recycling. Be sure to wash your hands after cleaning up.

If you break more than two fluorescent bulbs or if you are unsure what to do, call the Minnesota Duty Officer at 800-422-0798 any time, day or night.

