



Home Energy Check-up Information Sheet

Issue Number	Subject / Source	Date
1	Low energy Light Bulbs	Rev.08 2020

What are Compact Fluorescent Lights?

They are small fluorescent lamps which fit into standard light sockets, usually referred to as CFLs or energy saving light bulbs.

They last longer and use less energy than traditional (or incandescent) light bulbs, because they are much more efficient at changing electricity into light.

CFLs are also cost effective. Advice from the Energy Saving Trust suggests that because it will last up to 10 times longer than a traditional bulb, just one energy saving bulb could save up to £7 a year and, depending on the length of time lights are in use every day, could save around £60 before it needs replacing. Fit all the lights in your house with energy saving bulbs and you could save around £600 over the lifetime of the bulbs.

Are these bulbs bad for my health?

Energy efficient light bulbs are not a danger to the public.

Like many household products, they must be disposed off sensibly and there are suitable facilities available for this purpose. Although they contain mercury, it cannot escape from a lamp that is intact. In any case, the very small amount contained in an energy efficient bulb is unlikely to cause harm even if the lamp should be broken.

Do they cause epilepsy?

No – the new generation of energy efficient bulbs operate on a higher frequency than earlier models, which means a constant, flicker-free light. If your light does flicker it may be old and need replacing or it may be an 'early generation' bulb. We'd encourage people to look for the 'Energy Saving Recommended' label which means the bulb has met Energy Savings Trust criteria and standards.

Do CFLs contain mercury?

Yes, they need mercury to generate light efficiently. The mercury is used to produce ultraviolet light, which is then changed into light we can see by a special coating in the lamp. The coating is inert and poses no health risk.

Nowadays, the typical amount is around 4 milligrams per lamp – just enough to cover the tip of a ball point pen and just enough to last the expected life-time of the lamp.

How should I deal with a broken CFL?

Although the accidental breakage of a lamp is most unlikely to cause any health problems, it's good practice to minimize any unnecessary exposure to mercury, as well as risk of cuts from glass fragments.

Vacate the room and ventilate it for at least 15 minutes. Do not use a vacuum cleaner, but clean up using rubber gloves and aim to avoid creating and inhaling airborne dust. Sweep up all particles and glass fragments and place in a plastic bag. Wipe the area with a damp cloth, then add that to the bag and seal it. Mercury is hazardous and the bag should not be disposed of in the bin. All local councils have an obligation to make arrangements for the disposal of household hazardous waste at a civic amenity site or household waste recycling centre.

How should I dispose of unwanted CFLs, e.g. at the end of their life?

From 1st July 2007, waste CFLs have been subject to the requirements of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations. Those who sell items such as energy efficient bulbs must provide information to the public about where they can take waste bulbs and other WEEE. Some retailers will also take them back in store. However, most retailers have funded Designated Collection Facilities, in the main at local authority civic amenity sites. From this point, producers of the equipment fund the transport, treatment and recycling, where most of the mercury can be recovered.

N.B. There is a recycling bin for CFL's (no other kind) at Sandford Hardware, Sandford Avenue, Church Stretton When full the contents are taken to a bulk collection point for recycling.