

## Which consumer products contain mercury and how concerned should you be?

Commercial Fluorescent Tube  
15mg or 0.015g Mercury

Compact Fluorescent Bulb  
5mg or 0.005g Mercury

Thermometer (Mercury)  
5000mg or 5g Mercury

Thermostats  
3000mg or 3g Mercury

There are several common mercury containing devices found in homes, offices and institutional common spaces. The mercury contained in these devices does not represent an indoor air quality exposure hazard unless the item is broken releasing the mercury into the room. The amount of mercury contained in a Compact Fluorescent Bulb (5mg) is the size of the ball in a ball point pen. Most of this mercury is adhered to the inside surfaces of the bulb and will be removed when the broken bulb shards are cleaned up.

The greatest risk to an individual is in the 1 hour immediately after a Fluorescent bulb is broken when the vaporized mercury in the bulb is released into the air. Institutional spaces generally have higher room air turnover rates than in homes, so opening windows is not required to have a sufficient air flow to reduce indoor air mercury concentrations. If windows are present they can be opened to aid in the ventilation of the space.

In the event a CFL bulb is broken the mercury exposure would be equivalent to a fish dinner. Due to the wide concern on mercury contained in CFL's researchers at Berkeley Labs wrote a plain language essay detailing the risk which can provide more information from an independent source. (DANGEROUS MERCURY IN CFLS – ONE BIG FISH STORY by Robert Clear, Francis Rubinstein and Jack Howells, August 2009).

# Office Mercury Spill Clean-up Procedure

It is safe for any employee to clean up a broken fluorescent bulb. If assistance is required in the clean-up of a broken bulb please call Facilities Management at (250) 721-7616 or if you are in residence please call Residence Services at (250)721-8650.

## Clean-up Steps for Hard Surfaces and Carpeting or Rugs

1. Remove yourself and others from the localized area (3 meter radius) of the breakage for the 15 minutes immediately following breakage of a mercury containing device (guidance from Health Canada [The safety of compact fluorescent lamps](#))
2. Wearing disposable gloves (e.g. nitrile or latex) carefully scoop up bulb fragments into a container or sealable plastic bag.
3. Use sticky tape to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder. Place the used tape into the container.
4. Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or sponge placing all used items into the container.
5. Ensure all clean-up supplies including gloves are placed inside the container for disposal and the container is clearly labelled (i.e. Broken Fluorescent Bulb and clean up material).
6. Place the sealed disposal container with the bulb material in a ventilated room for collection by OHSE.
7. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
8. Complete the on-line request for Hazardous Waste disposal pick-up. <http://ohs.uvic.ca/environment/waste.php>

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