

Franklin County Solid Waste Management District

50 Miles Street

Greenfield, MA 01301

(413) 772-2438

(413) 772-3786 Fax

www.franklincountywastedistrict.org

Email: info@franklincountywastedistrict.org

New at the Shelburne Transfer Station: Fluorescent Bulb Recycling

Have you switched all or some of the light bulbs in your home to the new energy-saving spiral bulbs, also known as compact fluorescent lights (CFLs)? Great job! But you are not done yet. What are you going to do with that bulb when it burns out? Fluorescent light bulbs, including CFLs, should never be thrown in the trash because they contain mercury vapor. As of May 1, 2008 the MA DEP's Mercury Management Act "prohibits any person, household, business, school, healthcare facility or state or municipal government from knowingly disposing of a mercury-added product." Straight fluorescent lamps with a "green-cap" claim to have low mercury content, but these lamps should also be recycled under the new mercury management law.

The good news is that it is easier than ever to dispose of fluorescent light bulbs. Shelburne transfer station now has a fluorescent bulb recycling program for residents. Simply hand your fluorescent bulbs to the transfer station attendant. The fee for disposing of a compact, u tube, or circline bulb is \$0.50 each; the fee for disposing of a straight bulb is \$0.50 for a 4' lamp or \$1.00 for an 8' lamp.

To avoid exposure to mercury, fluorescent bulbs should be handled carefully. If a compact fluorescent bulb breaks, open a window to ventilate the room, and then leave the room for 10-15 minutes to allow the mercury vapor to dissipate. On returning to the room, use a broom, NOT a vacuum, to clean up the broken bulb. The broken pieces should be placed in the trash. Since the mercury has escaped, they are no longer hazardous waste. If you notice a white powder, this is phosphorous. It can be placed in the trash with the broken pieces.

You may be wondering if CFLs are worth the extra effort. The Energy Star website (www.energystar.gov) claims that "Energy Star qualified bulbs use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer." This energy conservation can translate into \$30 in electricity savings over each bulb's lifetime. Since CFLs save energy, less energy is drawn from coal-burning power plants. As coal is burned, power plants emit mercury, which pollutes rivers and lakes and makes fish unsafe to eat. By reducing energy use, CFLs actually *save* mercury from being emitted by coal fired power plants. Fluorescent lamps do not release mercury unless they are broken.

District residents may still bring fluorescent lamps to the annual Household Hazardous Waste Day, scheduled for September 13 in Charlemont, Montague, and Orange, or to the District's Regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection Sites. These "Super Sites" are located at the transfer stations in Bernardston, Colrain, and Conway. For more information on the sites, including hours and accepted materials, see www.franklincountywastedistrict.org/supersites.html or call 413-772-2438. MA Relay for the hearing impaired: 711 or 1-800-439-2370 (TTY/TDD)

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