

Cleaning Up a Broken CFL or Mercury Lamp

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From time to time lights containing mercury may break. The following procedure is taken from the EPA website <https://www.epa.gov/cfl/cleaning-broken-cfl#qi>

Typical fluorescent bulbs contain approximately 27 mg of mercury. When a cold bulb is broken, much of this mercury is absorbed onto the powder in the tube and plated on the glass. Only a small amount of free vapor exists that is free to enter a room. A running bulb on the other hand has a higher chance of releasing the mercury as a vapor. In both accounts, the amount of mercury released is relatively small. Quick pickup of the material after a period of room ventilation is sufficient to reduce exposure. The occupant or Facilities worker cannot clean up spills of larger amounts of mercury from sources such as UV bulbs, mercury microscope sources, thermometers, switches. These conditions must be addressed by the CWRU EHS office. Significant mercury can be present in these larger devices.

Cleanup

- If a break occurs of anything other than a CFL or fluorescent bulb, leave the room and contact CWRU Dispatch. They will in turn contact EHS. Do not allow anyone back into the space.
- In an office building or laboratory, there is sufficient air exchange to remove the vapor from the room within a short period of time for a CFL break. It is safe to clean up a broken CFL bulb if you are trained to do so.
- Clean up of a broken bulb:
 - Leave the area for at least 30 minutes before returning to attempt a cleanup. Notify EHS during this time period of the break.
 - Put on protective gloves like those used in laboratories. Any kind of glove will be appropriate.
 - Find a plastic bag or jar and carefully move the broken glass and dust into the container. The use of a little water will help keep the dust down.
 - If you have a larger section of glass simply tape it shut and then place the remaining section in a larger plastic bag.
 - Stiff paper or cardboard can be used as a shovel
 - Sticky tape can be used to pick up small glass and dust.;
 - Use damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes to clean hard surfaces.
 - If the break occurs on carpet there is nothing you can do and must have EHS attend to the spill. The carpet may require removal.
 - All collected material is considered hazardous waste and must be disposed of through the EHS program.

During Cleanup

- DO NOT VACUUM. Vacuuming is not allowed. Vacuuming could spread mercury-containing powder or mercury vapor. The vacuum will need disposal if used.
- Be thorough in collecting broken glass and visible powder. Scoop up glass fragments and powder using stiff paper or cardboard. Use sticky tape such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder. Place the used tape in the glass jar or plastic bag.
- If practical, continue to air out the room where the bulb was broken for several hours after cleanup is accomplished.