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Hazardous Materials Awareness Week Promotes the Safe Use and Disposal of Compact Fluorescent Lamps

Compact fluorescent lamps are small fluorescent light bulbs that can be screwed into a regular light socket. They use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer. However, these money and energy saving lamps contain a very small amount of potentially hazardous mercury.

Northeast Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) Staff Contact Jason Taylor would advise Florida residents to “know that they can safely clean up a broken compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) in their own homes, provided they use a little caution and have a little knowledge. A HazMat response team does not need to be alerted if a bulb breaks.”

In Florida, LEPCs have a responsibility to increase chemical safety in our communities. The District 4 LEPC serves seven counties in Northeast Florida and is staffed by the Northeast Florida Regional Council. LEPC Members are from a wide variety of occupational backgrounds and experiences, from local officials to firefighters to media members to health and safety.

January 18-24, 2009, has been declared as Hazardous Materials Awareness Week statewide by Florida’s Governor Charlie Crist. A goal for this year is to encourage the public to safely use and dispose of compact fluorescent lamps. The goal includes helping educate the public on how to safely clean-up a broken compact fluorescent lamp.

Each CFL contains a very small amount of mercury, usually around 5 milligrams, or about the amount that would cover the tip of a ball-point pen. In comparison, a mercury fever-thermometer contains about one hundred times as much.

To find a place to recycle these bulbs and other household hazardous waste items in your community, visit www.earth911.org to learn about the recycling options in your area of Florida. The LEPC is working with both public and private partners in promoting the safe use of CFLs. In Northeast Florida, the following locations accept CFLs:

Duval Household Hazardous Waste Facility

2675 Commonwealth Avenue
Jacksonville, FL 32254
(904) 387-8847

Clay County HHW Facility

3545 Rosemary Hill Road
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
(904) 284-6374

Flagler County HHW Center

1700 S. Old Kings Road
Flagler Beach, Flagler, FL 32136
386-517-2075

Tillman Ridge Municipal Solid Waste

3005 Allen Nease Rd.
Elkton, FL. 32033
(904) 827-6980

For more additional information, contact LEPC Staff Jason Taylor at jtaylor@nefrc.org or call (904) 279-0885 ext. 136.

CLEAN-UP INSTRUCTIONS

If a CFL or other fluorescent lamp should break in your home, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection recommends the following:

Do not use a broom or a vacuum to clean-up a mercury spill!**1. Ventilate the room**

Open a window. Leave the room and restrict access for at least 30 minutes. If available, point a floor or pedestal fan at the open window. Using a ceiling fan will not be as helpful at moving the air out of the window.

2. Pick up all materials you can

Wear disposable gloves. Carefully scoop up the fragments and powder with stiff paper or cardboard. Sticky tape (such as duct tape) can be used to pick up small pieces and powder. Wipe the area clean with a damp paper towel or disposable wet wipe.

3. Double bag and recycle

Place the broken CFL and clean-up materials in doubled plastic bags and seal the bags. Take the materials to a local household hazardous waste center or collection event, a fluorescent lamp recycling facility, or put into the household trash stored outside if no other recycling options are available.

4. Wash your hands

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