

tp24 press release - Health risks associated with low energy light bulbs.

Following recent media coverage regarding low energy light bulbs we have been asked by one or two of our customers for our comments.

It is a fact that fluorescent light bulbs contain mercury. Over the years this has been reduced significantly. Today each lamp contains only a tiny amount mercury (approx 6 milligrams) and other toxic substances, such as cadmium and lead, have been removed completely under the RoHS requirement (reduction of hazardous substances).

Modern low energy light bulbs are very different from early models and have electronic starting and high frequency electronics that eliminate visible flicker and buzzing associated with earlier models. These light bulbs are not a panacea, but offer substantial energy saving and long life. The industry is continuously improving the products and more solutions are being steadily progressed.

Disposal of the new small compact fluorescent bulbs is an issue and needs to be addressed. Energy saving and reduction of CO2 emissions are good for everyone and the Government is hoping that changing to low energy light bulbs will help significantly to achieve its Kyoto targets.

All importers and sellers of gas discharged lamps (including CFL's) are required by law to belong to a registered waste collection agency and have to pay the Government's tariff in addition to fees for the quantity sold. This is known as the WEEE regulations and the cost has been added to the price of the lamp or absorbed by the producer.

The money raised from this scheme should be used to set up additional recycling schemes for energy saving light bulbs, along with other electrical waste, but as yet there seems to be very little evidence of this happening. The advice from HMG is to take your light bulb to your local tip. For many of us the cost of this journey will probably out way the amount of CO2 saved in the first place.

At tp24 we are happy for you to send back any of our discarded lamps for us to dispose of properly. We would request that the failed lamp is returned in the packaging from the replacement. If the tube is actually broken then it should be placed in an airtight bag, sealed and securely packaged. We do not pay for the return of the bulb, but will happily dispose of it for free. We do not recycle lamps from other manufacturers or suppliers.

If you accidentally break a light bulb and actually break the internal tube you should take care to ensure the room is ventilated and carefully collect up the breakage with a brush and pan.

Official advice from the Department of the Environment states that if a low-energy bulb is smashed, the room needs to be vacated for at least 15 minutes.

A vacuum cleaner should not be used to clear up the debris, and care should be taken not to inhale the dust.

Instead, rubber gloves should be used, and the broken bulb put into a sealed plastic bag - which should be taken to the local council for disposal.

Unbroken used bulbs can be taken back to the retailer if they are a member of the Distributor Takeback Scheme.

Many leading scientists and toxicologists are on record saying that the DOE have over reacted and that we have been using CFL's for years without any problems. This is true and there are many fluorescent lamps in existence in our work places and in our homes. What is also true is that the

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amount of CFL's in circulation is rapidly growing and so we need to be more aware of how to handle them and how to dispose of them properly.

Low energy light bulbs are here and here to stay for some time to come so everyone needs to look at a balanced argument and a rational approach to dealing with the used lamps when they need to be replaced.