



SafetyAlert

We're Serious About Safety

Protecting Workers From Mercury Exposure From Fluorescent Bulbs



Metallic mercury poses health risks from inhalation and skin exposure. Tubular or compact fluorescent bulbs contain small amounts of the metal mercury sealed inside. If fluorescent bulbs are broken, small amounts of mercury will be released into the environment. Proper cleanup will reduce workers' exposure to the low levels of mercury anticipated when a fluorescent bulb is accidentally broken.

How Workers Can Be Exposed

- ✓ Breathing mercury vapor in the air.
- ✓ Skin contact with mercury.

Health Effects and Symptoms

- ✓ Signs of mercury poisoning include tremors; mood, memory or coordination changes; and skin irritation or allergy.
- ✓ Exposure to mercury can harm unborn children.

Preventing Accidental Breakage

- ✓ Handle bulbs carefully and store away from workers.
- ✓ Package bulbs in a sturdy container to prevent breakage.
- ✓ Label containers of fluorescent bulbs.



Source:

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3536.pdf>

Safe Cleanup of Broken Fluorescent Bulbs

- ✓ Notify workers and tell them to stay away from the area.
- ✓ Open any windows and doors to air out the room.
- ✓ Do not use a broom or vacuum cleaner unless the vacuum cleaner is specifically designed to collect mercury.
- ✓ Wear appropriate disposable chemical-resistant gloves.
- ✓ Use a commercial mercury spill kit if available, or scoop up pieces of glass and powder with stiff paper or cardboard to avoid contact with the broken glass.
- ✓ Use sticky tape to pick up any remaining pieces of glass.
- ✓ Wipe down hard floors with a damp paper towel.
- ✓ Place all pieces of glass and cleanup materials in a sealable plastic bag or a glass jar with a lid.
- ✓ Wash your hands thoroughly after cleanup.



Disposing of Fluorescent Bulbs

- ✓ Follow EPA and state government regulations for disposal of fluorescent bulbs and mercury-contaminated waste.

This material is being provided to you as a service of The Beacon Mutual Insurance Company for informational purposes only and is not intended, nor should it be relied upon, as a comprehensive statement of all possible work related hazards to your employees or of the federal, state or local laws and regulations which may be applicable to your business. Any premises inspections made by Beacon representatives are completed without representation or warranty as to the utility or completeness of such inspections. Suggestions regarding the use of a particular product or safety technique are not an endorsement of the product or technique. It is your responsibility to develop and implement your loss prevention policies. You should direct questions concerning specific situations to informed and appropriate advisors.