Disposal of energy efficient lighting tubes and bulbs

Small amounts of mercury are contained in T5 energy efficient fluorescent, high intensity discharge (HID) and compact fluorescent (CFL) tubes and bulbs. Most of these tubes and bulbs contain fewer than 5 mg of mercury, and very small amounts of mercury are also found as fumes from these products.

Even if a tube or bulb breaks this does **not** constitute a significant health risk due to the very small amounts of mercury present and the short exposure time.

Appropriate disposal and clean-up of these products helps to minimise any safety or environmental concerns by staff or the community.

Disposal of intact tubes and bulbs

Recycling: Department workplaces are encouraged to access environmentally friendly methods of disposal to safely recycle the bulbs:

- check recyclingnearyou.com.au or Fluorocycle to see if there are lighting recycling options available in your area
- contact your local council to determine if they have disposal programs.

There may be small fees associated with recycling services. These are to be funded by the school/departmental workplace.

- Wrap the bulb or tube tightly in newspaper or place it in the original or new bulb's box and drop off at the collection/recycling location.

Bin disposal: Queensland Health advises wrapping fluorescent tubes or bulbs in paper and disposing with regular waste is a suitable option provided the rubbish goes to landfill. Check with your local council to confirm whether your rubbish goes to landfill (e.g. not to a waste processor).

What can be recycled?

- Linear and U-shaped fluorescent and coated fluorescent tubes
- High pressure mercury or sodium vapour lamps
- Metal halide lamps
- Ultraviolet lamps
- Projector lamps
- Compact fluorescent lamps
- High intensity discharge tubes
- Incandescent lamps
- Halogen (down) lighting
- Neon tubing
- LED and Smart lights

- Where possible, place the wrapped fluorescent bulb or tube into your workplace's industrial bin rather than in your regular bin. This will reduce the risk of breakage when cleaners empty these bins and further clean up or injury from broken glass.

Disposal of broken tubes and bulbs

- Open nearby windows and allow the room to ventilate for 15 minutes. Turn off air conditioning or heating during this time.
- Wear disposable gloves and dust mask during clean up.
- Scoop up broken material with something you can then throw out or wipe down – e.g. stiff paper or cardboard instead of a brush – avoid generating and inhaling dust.
- Wipe up the remaining debris with a damp cloth or pick up fine glass with sticky tape.
- Discard all items – preferably place in a sealed container. Wrap in paper if a container is not available. Dispose of all items in an outside rubbish bin - that preferably has a lid e.g., industrial bin
- Do not use a vacuum to clean up as this can disperse the mercury.
- Ventilate the room before reuse.

Further information

- Contact your School's Facilities Operations Team for energy efficient lighting enquiries.
- Contact Regional Senior Health and Safety Consultants for health and safety enquiries.