



Improper Disposal of Fluorescent Bulbs Results in Penalties

Mercury is an essential component of fluorescent, high-pressure sodium vapor, mercury vapor, metal halide, and neon/argon lamps. It is a toxic metal that vaporizes when exposed to air. The vapor can then be breathed into the lungs or absorbed through the skin. When these lamps are deposited into trash compactors they are crushed, which releases the mercury into the air. The proper disposal of mercury containing bulbs/lamps is extremely important to help reduce public exposure to harmful mercury emissions.

What Is DEP Doing?

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has investigated several non-industrial sites such as grocery stores, retail stores and shopping malls and found they were improperly disposing of their spent bulbs/lamps in violation of the regulations. In several cases, the DEP has cited and penalized both the owners of the facilities and their waste contractors for the improper disposal of mercury containing bulbs/lamps.

What Should I Do?

The DEP and the USEPA encourage generators of mercury containing lamps to handle them as universal waste. The universal waste rules are less restrictive than hazardous waste rules and were established to make it easier for generators to recycle certain widely used hazardous wastes such as batteries, pesticides, mercury-containing equipment, thermostats, consumer electronics and lamps.

Generators of mercury-containing lamps can only treat them as universal waste if they are unbroken. Once lamps are broken they must be handled under the more restrictive hazardous waste rules. For proper disposal as a Universal Waste, spent lamps should be placed in containers or packages that are adequate to prevent breakage and sent to an appropriate recycling facility (see internet address below for a list). Homeowners are not subject to either the hazardous or universal waste rules. They should take their spent bulbs to a local household hazardous waste collection facility (see internet address below for a list).

COMPLIANCE ADVISORY

Who should I contact with questions?

Hazardous Waste Compliance and Enforcement - Northern Field Office (Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, and Warren Counties)	973-656-4470
Hazardous Waste Compliance and Enforcement – Central Field Office (Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean and Union Counties)	609-584-4250
Hazardous Waste Compliance and Enforcement – Southern Field Office (Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties)	856-614-3658

Where can I get more information?

The following web sites can be accessed for additional information regarding this advisory:

A summary of Solid and Hazardous Waste rules can be found at:
<http://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/lrm/uwaste/uwmerc.lamps.htm>

A list of recycling facilities, which accept fluorescent lamps, can be found at:
<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dshw/lrm/uwaste/uwlampst.htm>

For further information a Hazardous Waste Lamp Fact Sheet can be found at:
<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dshw/lrm/uwaste/uwmerc.lamps.htm>

New Jersey County Household Hazardous Waste Coordinators and Program Summaries
<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dshw/rntp/hhwcps.htm>

Compliance Advisory on the Use of Bulb Crushing Machines
<http://www.nj.gov/dep/enforcement/advisories/2005-13.pdf>

Visit the following Web site for general information:

Contact NJDEP: <http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/dep/contactdep.pl>

To comment on this advisory:

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/enforcement/survey.html>

Please note this advisory is intended to be a summary explanation of a department initiative. It does not include all potentially applicable requirements. If you have any questions related to compliance with this initiative, please contact the numbers listed above.