

IN CASE OF BROKEN BULB GRAB FIVE PLASTIC BAGS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has issued a set of instructions detailing what home owners should do in the event that a compact florescent bulb, which contains mercury, breaks in their home. The warning, updated in the Fall of 2008, contains a list of dos and don'ts to be followed when the mercury bulb hits the floor.

Among the don'ts are the following:

- Never use a vacuum cleaner. The vacuum could put mercury into the air and increase exposure.
- Never use a broom for cleaning, as it could break the mercury into smaller particles.
- Never pour the breakage down a drain as it may lodge in the plumbing.
- Never wash clothing or other items that have come into direct contact with mercury in a washing machine because the mercury may contaminate the machine and pollute sewers.
- Never walk around if your shoes may contain fragments contaminated with mercury.

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pets leave the room*

The advisory then goes on to list things that can be done if a compact fluorescent bulb breaks.

Before clean up:

- Open a window and leave the room for 15 minutes or more as well as shut off the heating and air conditioning. These procedures should be followed regardless of weather conditions.
- Have children and pets leave the room.
- Don't let anyone, including pets, walk through the breakage area on their way out.

Cleanup steps for hard surfaces

- The glass pieces and powder should be carefully scooped up using stiff paper or cardboard and placed in a sealed plastic bag.
- Use sticky tape to pick up any remaining small glass fragments or powder.
- The area should be wiped clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes.
- These should be placed in a sealed plastic bag for disposal.
- A vacuum cleaner or a broom should not be used on hard surfaces.

SOMETHING TO DO WHILE THE WINDOW IS OPEN

Cleanup steps for carpeting or rug.

- Carefully pick up glass fragments using a rubber glove and place them in a sealed plastic bag.
- Use sticky tape to pick up any remaining small glass fragments or powder.
- If vacuuming is needed, remove the vacuum bag and place it in a sealed plastic bag for disposal.
- For the next several times the homeowner vacuums, shut off the heat and air conditioning and open the window for 15 minutes, again regardless of weather conditions.

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Cleanup steps for clothing, bedding or other soft materials.

- If clothing or bedding materials come in direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from inside the bulb, throw it away.
- If shoes come into direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from the bulb, wipe them off with damp paper towels and place the towels in a plastic bag for disposal.

Regarding disposal, check with local authorities with respect to regulations for the disposal of materials containing mercury.

A summary of these precautions would suggest that if homeowners are going to experience broken fluorescent bulbs, they would be wisest to have this occur during mild weather, wear their most disposable clothes during clean up, train pets on safe exit procedures and keep a stock of plastic bags handy.

