



# WHAT IF A MERCURY-CONTAINING LIGHT BULB BREAKS?

## MERCURY-CONTAINING LIGHT BULBS

### Which light bulbs may contain mercury?

- Fluorescent light bulbs that are linear, U-shaped
- Circular & coil-shaped compact bulbs
- Bulbs for “bug zappers”
- Tanning bulbs
- Black lights
- Germicidal bulbs
- High-output bulbs
- Cold-cathode fluorescent bulbs
- High-intensity discharge bulbs
- Metal halide bulbs
- Ceramic metal halide bulbs
- High-pressure sodium and mercury vapor bulbs
- Mercury-short arc bulbs
- Neon bulbs

### Why is mercury in some light bulbs?

A small amount of mercury vapor and inert gases are inside some light bulbs. When electric current passes through the gas, the mercury generates ultraviolet (UV) light. The UV light causes a coating on the tube inside the bulb to convert the UV light into visible light.

### Why is it important to clean up mercury-containing bulbs properly?

Mercury vapor is released when the bulb is broken. Inhaling mercury vapor is hazardous to your health. Breathing in mercury vapors may cause symptoms such as cough, fever, difficulty breathing, nausea, vomiting, headaches, increased salivation and an acute metallic taste in the mouth.

## WHAT TO DO

- Evacuate people and pets from the room.
- Close interior doors and open windows to air out the room. Seal off air ducts with **plastic** and **tape**. If possible use a **fan** so that air flows from the house, through the room and then outside. Air out the room for five to 10 minutes.
- Wearing **gloves**, scoop up glass fragments and powder using **stiff paper** or **cardboard**.
- Use **tape** to remove any remaining small glass fragments and powder.
- Wipe the area clean with **damp paper towels** or **wet wipes**.
- Place any glass fragments, the cardboard, tape, damp paper towels or wet wipes, and gloves into a **sealable container or plastic bag**.
- Place sealable container outdoors in a **trash container**.
- Wash hands thoroughly with **soap** and **water**.
- **Call** your local solid waste services center and ask about disposal options. For spent lamps the Division of Environmental Quality website [Fluorescent Light Recycling Options for Households](#) or call (877) 623-6748.
- Air out the room and keep HVAC shut off in the room where the bulb broke for several more hours.



## WHAT NOT TO DO



- **Do not walk into other rooms if your shoes or clothing might have mercury powder on them.** It will spread into other rooms and be harder to clean up and contain.
- **Never use a vacuum to clean up a mercury glass or powder.** The vacuum will become contaminated and will disperse mercury vapors into the air.
- **Don't sweep up mercury glass or powder with a broom.** The powder will be more difficult to capture and increase the amount of vapor released.
- **Never dump mercury powder down the drain.** It will settle in the drain trap.