



Department of
Toxic Substances
Control

*Preventing
environmental
damage from
hazardous waste,
and restoring
contaminated
sites for all
Californians.*



State of California



California
Environmental
Protection Agency

Managing Hazardous Waste

Fact Sheet, May 2007

It is Illegal to Discard Fluorescent Light Tubes/Lamps in the Trash!

A fluorescent light tube in your dumpster is a violation of the hazardous waste laws. Violation of these laws can result in large fines and criminal prosecution.

Fluorescent tubes contain mercury and become hazardous wastes when they no longer work. Mercury poses especially serious hazards to pregnant women and small children. Non-working tubes must be recycled by an authorized recycling firm and cannot be discarded in the trash.

Fluorescent tubes and bulbs may be managed as universal wastes under Title 22, Chapter 23 of the California Code of Regulations. This allows those who wish to discard their fluorescent tubes and lamps to do so more easily than if they were managed as hazardous wastes.

Although spent fluorescent lights can not go into the trash, there are several options for getting them to an environmentally safe and responsible recycler.



The general public/households

- Look for participants in the Take it Back Partnership who will take fluorescent tubes and/or bulbs at no cost. <http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/TIB/index.cfm>
- Find the local Household Hazardous Waste Facility to take fluorescent tubes and bulbs along with other universal wastes.
 1. <http://www.earth911.org>
 2. <http://ccelearn.csus.edu/mercurylamp/content/resources5.htm>

Businesses

- Must ensure fluorescent waste tubes and/or bulbs are destined for a recycling facility.
- May handle fluorescent tubes/bulbs as universal waste which allows for the option of self-transport and use of an invoice, bill of lading, or other document rather than a hazardous waste manifest.
- May accumulate spent tubes for up to one year before sending them to a recycling firm.
- Requires only informal training for most employees handling spent tubes.
- Must keep some form of documentation to demonstrate tubes were managed properly.

The regulations do not allow the use of "tube crushers." If you are considering operating one of these devices, you should contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control regarding permit requirements.



There are a number of resources for further information about recycling spent fluorescent tubes on the Internet.

- **DTSC's Universal Waste** webpage provides further information on universal wastes such as fluorescents:

<http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/UniversalWaste/index.cfm>

- **The California Integrated Waste Management Board's** web site has good information on recycling fluorescent tubes:

<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WPIE/FluoresLamps/>

- **The Association of Lighting and Mercury Recyclers** home page has information about recycling lamps and lists the nation's fluorescent tube recyclers:

<http://www.almr.org>

For more information, contact the DTSC office nearest you, or call the regional Public and Business Liaisons at (800) 72-TOXIC (800-728-6942). From outside California, call (916) 255-3545.

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