

Management of Spent Fluorescent Lamps for Charlotte County Businesses and Government Entities

Fluorescent or High Intensity Discharge (HID) lighting is a good business choice. Compared to incandescent lighting, fluorescent and HID lighting use less energy and produce less heat. Less energy and heat not only result in lower lighting and cooling costs, but they also result in utility power plants emitting less air pollutants such as mercury, lead, nitrogen oxides, and sulfur dioxides. If you are considering switching to high-efficiency fluorescent or HID lighting, don't hesitate to make the change. Although fluorescent and HID lighting save energy and money, they do present special disposal considerations. Fluorescent and HID lamps (as well as some types of neon lamps) contain mercury and in most cases are considered to be hazardous wastes when disposed. Mercury is a toxic metal that in certain forms can accumulate in living tissue and cause adverse health effects.

Although the amount of mercury in each lamp is small, several million lamps are discarded by Florida businesses each year, making these lamps one of the largest sources of mercury in our garbage. When a lamp is broken or placed in a landfill or incinerator, the mercury can contaminate the air, surface water, and ground water. Mercury contamination in Florida is most evident from the Department of Health's warnings of high mercury levels in fish in a number of our lakes and in the Everglades.

Because of this, these types of spent lamps, excluding those from households, containing any amount of mercury have been banned from solid waste incineration since July 1, 1994, in any quantity. Since most of these types of lamps contain hazardous levels of mercury, they should not be disposed of at solid waste landfills in Florida. Local solid waste departments are the final authority for landfill disposal and may decide to refuse to accept any spent lamps from generators, regardless of the amount of mercury contained in the lamps, especially in those counties or municipalities that also operate solid waste incinerators. **Charlotte County** businesses and governmental facilities generating spent fluorescent and HID lamps ("Generators") have only one option for disposal: Recycling. Charlotte County does not currently have a location for businesses to bring spent lamps. There are several lamp recyclers that will pick up lamps from your location and many offer recycling by mail which is good for businesses that do not generate very many spent lamps. Some of the regulations include the following:

1. Store lamps in an area and in a manner that will prevent them from breaking (closed box or other container). Do not stuff too many or too few lamps into the shipping container. Recycling facilities request that you do not tape lamps together for storage or shipment and may not accept lamps that are taped together.
2. Label the lamps or each container as "Spent Mercury-Containing Lamps"

for Recycling" or "Universal Waste Mercury Lamps", or "Waste (or Used) Mercury Lamps".

3. A business or institutional generator location may accumulate and store up to 5,000 kilograms of lamps (20,000 lamps) at any one time and for up to one year, *if the lamps are destined for recycling*, without being subject to notification requirements (EPA Form 8700-12).
4. If lamps are accidentally broken, immediately contain the broken lamps and store them in a tightly sealed container. It is recommended that you mark the container as "*Broken Spent Mercury-Containing Lamps For Recycling*".
5. Train employees in proper lamp handling, packaging and emergency cleanup and containment procedures. Non-lamp residues containing mercury and that are generated as a result of a lamp cleanup are to be managed as hazardous waste.