

### **1. Isolate the site.**

Get everyone out of the area. Open windows, leave the room, and close the door behind you. Turn off the heating or cooling system. Children and pregnant or nursing mothers should not return until cleanup is complete.

### **2. Air out the room for 5 to 15 minutes.**

Give mercury vapor time to disperse and settle into tiny dust-like beads. Don't wait longer: mercury spreads easily.

### **3. Don safety gear.**

Wear rubber gloves, safety (or other) glasses, work clothes and a dust mask or face covering when cleaning up the broken bulb.

### **4. Put large bulb pieces and other waste in a large glass jar with a screw-on metal lid, such as a Mason jar.**

Scoop up glass fragments and dust with stiff paper or cardboard and deposit in the jar. Pat the area with sticky tape to collect tiny splinters and dust, then wipe with a damp cloth, baby wipe or moist paper towels. (Second choice: a plastic jar with a screw-on lid.)

### **5. Seal up the waste.**

Put paper, cardboard, tape and wipes in the jar and close the lid. Throw away any contaminated fabrics, like clothing or bedding, that have come into direct contact with bulb fragments.

### **6. If a bulb breaks on a rug or carpeting:**

Fabrics are harder to clean than hard surfaces; removing all mercury may be impossible. Hang a CFL-contaminated rug outside. Experts disagree on whether to vacuum carpeting. EPA recommends doing so and cleaning the vacuum afterward. Scientists with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection disagree: after testing various CLF cleanup scenarios [[link](#)], they concluded that vacuuming can spread mercury vapor and permanently contaminate the vacuum.

Keep infants, children and women of childbearing age away from the carpeting for several weeks.

### **7. Wash up.**

The clothes you wore to clean up the breakage can be washed unless they made direct contact with the broken bulb or dust. Wipe your shoes with wet wipes or a moist paper towel, then add the wipes to the waste jar. Wash your hands and face.

### **8. Follow your state's disposal rules.**

<http://www.wasteless.org>

<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/wastetypes/universal/lamps/index.htm>

### **9. Ventilate the room for several more hours.**

Next time you clean the area:

Turn off heating or cooling systems, close the room's doors and open the windows before vacuuming. Leave doors closed and heating or cooling off for 15 minutes post-vacuuming. Follow this regime for several cleanings.

Recommendations adapted from the [Maine Department of Environmental Protection study](#).

Thermometers, thermostats and silent switches made with mercury contain more toxic material and pose a much greater health risk. If one of these items breaks, read EPA's clean-up instructions at:

<http://www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/index.htm#thermometer>