

An Act to Provide for the Safe Collection and Recycling of Mercury-Containing Light Bulbs

Protect people, save money, promote fairness

Fluorescent lights work well, save money and are gaining in popularity.

- Fluorescents provide excellent light while using much less energy than incandescent bulbs. They save energy, money, and help reduce global warming from power plants.
- CFLs (compact fluorescents) are gaining market share and this trend will accelerate as old-fashioned, inefficient incandescent light bulbs are largely slated to be phased out by 2014.
- LFLs (tube lights) have been widely used for decades in schools, hospitals and businesses.

Fluorescent bulbs contain small amounts of mercury and should be properly disposed of.

- Many Mainers don't know that these light bulbs contain mercury and should not be discarded in the trash. Others don't know where to take their used bulbs for safe disposal and recycling.
- The amount of mercury in fluorescent light bulbs varies widely. There is 30 times more mercury in some CFLs than others,ⁱ while some tube (LFL) lights contain 80 times more than others.ⁱⁱ Setting limits on the amount of mercury that bulbs contain, as California has done, will reduce mercury use and potential problems.



Maine needs an ongoing program to ensure fluorescent bulbs are safely collected and recycled.



- Currently, the state has a pilot residential collection program, which takes funds from energy efficiency programs to pay for safe collection and recycling. Last year, the program collected around 4,000 CFLs, but provided rebates to buy 1.2 million bulbs.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The pilot residential program is winding down and is slated to be phased out in the next several years,^{iv} and there is no collection program for Maine businesses.
- With old-fashioned incandescent light bulbs slated to largely phased out in

2014,^v it's important to act now. Building on the success of Maine's e-waste and mercury thermostat laws, manufacturers need to share in the responsibility for collecting and recycling these bulbs.

The bill would:

- Set a maximum mercury content standard for all mercury-containing lighting, reducing mercury in lighting across the board, lowering mercury use and potential hazards.
- Create a shared-responsibility collection and recycling system for consumers, and take steps to create a collection program for Maine businesses.
- Improve the state's procurement policy to purchase fluorescent lighting with the lowest possible mercury content while maximizing energy efficiency & lamp life.



Maine lawmakers have an opportunity to protect our families and save taxpayers money by setting a reasonable standard for how much mercury can be contained in bulbs sold in Maine, and by requiring bulb manufacturers to share in the cost and responsibility for safe collection and recycling.

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References:

ⁱ Culver, Alicia. "Mercury in Lighting Equipment." Green Purchasing Institute. 9/26/2008.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bacon, Richard. Efficiency Maine. From conversation on 1/26/2009.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v "Phase out of incandescent lightbulbs." Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banning_of_incandescent_lightbulbs