

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



State of California



Department of Toxic Substances Control

Managing Hazardous Waste

FACT SHEET, January 2005

It is Illegal for Most Firms to Discard Fluorescent Light Tubes in the Trash!

A fluorescent light tube in your dumpster may be 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.



California's Department of Toxic Substances Control adopted special regulations that explain how to manage and recycle fluorescent tubes. These regulations:

- Allow spent fluorescent tubes to be managed as "universal wastes."
- Allow businesses to accumulate spent tubes for up to one year before sending them to a recycling firm.
- Require only informal training for most employees handling spent tubes.
- Allow you to ship spent tubes to a lamp recycler or to transport them to a lamp recycler yourself without using a hazardous waste hauler.
- Require that spent tubes be ultimately recycled by an authorized recycler, not disposed.
- Requires generators to keep some form of documentation to demonstrate tubes were managed properly.

These regulations do not authorize the use of "tube crushers." If you are 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.

- The State of California's Universal Waste Rule (including spent mercury lamps) fact sheet can be found at: http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/PublicationsForms/HWM_FS_UWR.pdf
- The California Integrated Waste Management Board's Web site on fluorescent tubes has lots of good information on recycling fluorescent tubes: <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WPIE/FluoresLamps/>
- The Association of Lighting and Mercury Recyclers home page. This page has lots of 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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