

Meridian Safety Solutions keeping you informed

SAFETY ALERT

Energy Saving Light Bulbs - **WARNING** Graphic Images

Low-energy light bulbs have been in existence for a long time now. As the name suggests, they are more efficient than the ordinary tungsten bulbs in terms of power consumption. Most of us are now using them in order to save energy and ultimately reduce our electricity bills. It is also becoming difficult to source alternatives as they are no longer available to purchase in the UK.



Low-energy bulbs come in many different shapes and sizes with varying ratings in terms of voltage or watts. They are generally more expensive to buy than regular light bulbs, but the energy saved soon offsets their cost.

Health and Safety Issues with Energy Saving Light Bulbs

As with most types of light bulbs low-energy bulbs are fragile as they are partly made of glass. If these types of bulbs get broken they pose a very serious threat to your health and safety.

Therefore the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has issued the following advice on what to do if a low-energy light bulb breaks:

-  Evacuate the room for 15 minutes, taking care not to step on the broken glass
-  Do not use a vacuum cleaner to clear up the mess as it will spread toxic mercury droplets around the building
-  Put on good cut resistant gloves and carefully sweep the debris into a dustpan
-  Place the remains in a double wrapped plastic bag and carefully seal and label it
-  Do not place it in the normal waste bin. Instead, place it in a recycling bin for batteries, which also contain mercury, or take it your local council dump so that it can be disposed of safely
-  Be careful not to inhale any dust from the broken bulb.

Low-energy Light Bulb - Mercury Exposure Incident

A low-energy light bulb fused at the home of the injured person. Unfortunately he did not wait until the globe had cooled, instead he used a cloth to hold on to it. As he remove it the hot globe burnt his fingers and he dropped it, and when it fell to the floor the globe broke. As he stepped down from the chair that he used to reach the bulb he stood on the broken glass and cut his foot. He sought first aid treatment for the cut and was later admitted to hospital due to being exposed to the mercury powder that escaped from the broken bulb and had then entered the wound. He spent the next two weeks in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and at one stage it was feared his foot would require amputation. Currently his foot is attached to a special vacuum system that continuously withdraws the contaminated dead tissue. A very long road to recovery awaits him.

Below are the images of his injured foot showing the vacuum system withdrawing the dead tissue and the spreading wound that appears to be unable to heal whilst the mercury remains.



Why didn't we know this before?

The presence of mercury in low-energy light bulbs, though well known, seems not to have been well communicated to the public in the UK. But as Steve Poole, laboratory manager for the UK trade body The Lighting Association, points out, 'fluorescent technology has been around for years without this being worthy of comment before.' Now that CFL's are seeing widespread use, the mercury issues have been rediscovered, leading to calls for advice on light bulb care and disposal to be printed on CFL packaging. The disposal advice itself has not changed.

You have been warned. Please forward this message to your colleagues.

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Meridian
SAFETY SOLUTIONS

20 George Street
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO50 9BU

t. 02380 647 302

e. admin@meridiansafety.co.uk

w. www.meridiansafety.co.uk