

MERCURY FAST FACTS

- **7,000 Tons** of mercury is released annually from natural sources, primarily from volcanoes.
- **6,000 Tons/year** of mercury is released from fossil-fuel power plant emissions, primarily from coal plants.
- **3,500 Tons/year** of mercury is released from such sources as automobiles, natural gas furnaces, and municipal waste incinerators.
- EPA's highest estimate for lamp disposal mercury emissions is **2.5 Tons/year**
- Fluorescent & HID lamps make up approximately **3.5 percent of total landfill mercury**. Most of the "landfill mercury" comes from mercury switches.
- **94 –98 percent** of the mercury in a spent fluorescent lamp is absorbed into the phosphor coating of the lamp making it unavailable for human consumption. Only a trace amount of mercury remains in the spent lamp as a vapor.
- Installing CFLs reduces power plant mercury emissions causing **a net reduction of mercury emissions to the environment** and a reduction in CO₂ emissions.
- The average 4' T12 tube manufactured in 1985 contained **48.2 milligrams** of mercury. By 1994, manufacturers cut this number by more than half to **22.8**.
- Today, the T8 Alto 4' tube contains around **3.8 milligrams** of mercury.
- All Compact Fluorescent Lamps contain **less than 5 milligrams** of mercury.
- A mercury thermometer contains **½ to 3 grams** of mercury.
- According to the EPA, "Breaking a fever thermometer is not considered to be a significant health threat to a consumer. As such, the effects of accidentally breaking a fluorescent lamp are even less." If concerned about mercury exposure from CFLs, buy a plastic-encapsulated CFL.
- Commercial users need to follow federal, state, & local regulations. Federal regulations for uniform hazardous waste disposal can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/> .
- Households are exempt from EPA's uniform hazardous waste restrictions. However, responsible citizens should recycle hazardous waste and other recyclables if reasonably possible. There may be a waste transfer recycling station near you.
- Since there is a minuscule amount of mercury in a CFL, it is recommended that you not make a special trip to a recycling station. You should wait until you have a significant amount of hazardous waste before driving to a recycling station.

For more information on this topic, contact BPA engineer Craig Ciranny at: (503) 230-5865.