

Best Management Practices for N.H. Solid Waste Facilities

Mercury-Containing Devices & Lamps/Bulbs

Mercury is a heavy metal that can accumulate in living tissue and cause health problems. Mercury and mercury compounds are sometimes intentionally added to products to provide a specific characteristic, appearance or quality, or to perform a specific function. There is a ban on the disposal of mercury-added products, including lamps and compact fluorescent bulbs, thermometers, thermostats, switches and relays, in solid waste landfills and incinerators.

To comply with this ban, facility operators must:

- Post a sign at the facility about the ban on the disposal of mercury-added products;
- Provide facility customers with written notice of the prohibition against the disposal of mercury-added products;
- Provide customers with information about collection programs that can accept mercury-added products; and
- Monitor incoming wastes to detect the presence of mercury-added products.

Transfer stations are encouraged to collect and recycle mercury-containing items. Separate them from regular solid waste and manage the items as a Universal or Hazardous Waste. Managing mercury wastes under the Universal Waste Rule is the best option for most facilities. Municipalities are eligible to use the State contract to recycle fluorescent bulbs, lamps and other mercury-containing devices.

Best Management Practices for All Mercury-Containing Wastes

- Train employees who handle mercury containing devices to implement proper handling and emergency procedures, including proper cleanup of mercury spills.
- Store devices in containers that are sturdy, intact and stable (to prevent tipping).



Collect button cell batteries, thermometers, thermostats, relays, switches and other mercury containing devices in labeled, covered plastic containers.

- Store containers in a designated location away from high traffic areas and inside, where they will not be exposed to weather.
- Label containers with the words “Universal Waste – Mercury-Containing Devices,” or “Used Mercury-Containing Devices” or “Waste Mercury-Containing Devices”.
- Place a start date on the container when first used and contact a cleanup contractor for proper disposal.

Best Management Practices for Fluorescent Bulbs and Lamps

- Clearly label each container holding universal waste lamps with any of the following: “Used Lamp(s),” “Universal Waste – Lamps,” or “Waste Lamps.”

Did You Know?

- In N.H., mercury has been detected in freshwater fish and there is a statewide fish consumption advisory issued by the N.H. Department of Health & Human Services.
- Even “green tip” fluorescent bulbs and lamps have mercury.
- It is illegal to intentionally break fluorescent lamps.

- Handle fluorescent lamps to make sure they do not break. In addition, separate them from metal-halide, mercury vapor and high intensity discharge (HID) lamps.
- Store used, intact lamps indoors in the same box that new lamps were shipped in or other boxes of similar size, in a fiber drum, or in containers supplied by a State contractor. Do not store lamps in a metal drum because they will break easily. Containers need to be closed except when lamps are being added.
- Pack boxes to minimize breakage; for example, line boxes with plastic and use spacers between lamps so bulbs cannot move. Do not pack too many lamps into a container as the pressure can cause breakage.
- Do not tape lamps together. Many recycling facilities do not accept lamps that are taped.
- Seal the boxes with tape as soon as they are filled.
- If a bulb breaks:
 - > Clear the area then ventilate the room, or go outside, for 15 minutes.
 - > Remove all materials you can but DO NOT VACUUM.
 - Wear disposable gloves, if available.
 - Carefully clean up the glass fragments and residue with a stiff paper or cardboard or sticky tape.
 - Wipe the area clean with a damp paper towel, cloth or disposable wet wipe.
 - > Place all cleanup materials in a sturdy glass container with a tight-fitting metal lid. Store the container away from high traffic areas as described above.
 - > Hire a cleanup contractor for proper disposal at a permitted facility.



Never store fluorescent lamps/bulbs unsheltered, without containers or in such a manner where they could be easily broken.



Place fluorescent lamps/bulbs inside a structure that shelters them from the weather, stored inside sturdy containers and closed except when lamps are being added. (Boxes are open to show lamps inside.)

For additional information, contact:
 Solid Waste Management Bureau
 N.H. Department of Environmental Services
 29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95 Concord, NH 03302-0095
 (603) 271-2925 fax: (603) 271-2456
solidwasteinfo@des.nh.gov

