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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santa Barbara County Public Works Department Reminds Residents of Safe Fluorescent Lamp Disposal

Spring is the time of year when many residents clean out hazardous chemicals from their homes and garages. Often forgotten in the long list of materials considered to be hazardous are fluorescent lamps which contain mercury. Mercury-containing lamps include fluorescent tubes, compact fluorescents, metal halide lamps such as floodlights, sodium lights used as security lighting, and mercury vapor lamps used for street lighting.

In California, it is illegal to throw fluorescent lamps in the trash as their breakage results in the release of mercury vapor. Although the amount of mercury released is small, the mercury vapor can be absorbed through the lungs into the bloodstream and the mercury can also be washed into local waterways.

Fluorescent lamps should be disposed of at a household hazardous waste facility, an authorized recycling facility, or a universal waste handler. Care should be used when storing and transporting fluorescent lamps. Fluorescent tubes should not be taped together and all lights should be kept in their original boxes or some other type of container with a lid.

If a fluorescent lamp breaks in a home there are steps that can be taken to clean it up properly. First, the room should be aired out by opening windows for at least 15 minutes while shutting off any heating and air-conditioning systems; people and pets should leave the room. Then, the pieces should be scooped up and placed in a solid container with a lid or a sealed plastic bag. Use tape to pick up powder and small pieces, wipe with a damp paper towel and put the towel in the container with the broken pieces. Do not use a vacuum or broom. If a vacuum needs to be used on carpet, remove the vacuum bag when finished or empty, and wipe out the canister. After cleanup, be sure to take all material to a proper disposal site.

You can find more information on proper fluorescent lamp disposal on LessIsMore.org, the County's ultimate waste reduction and recycling website. A list of drop-off sites is available in the "Where to Go" section at the bottom of the [Fluorescent Light Tubes](#) page or the [CFL's- Compact Fluorescent Lights](#) page. You can also call our staff at 882-3602.

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