



Franklin County Solid Waste Management District

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Safe Disposal of Wall Mounted Thermostats and Fluorescent Light Bulbs

Have you upgraded to a new programmable thermostat or LED lightbulbs for your home or business? Great! But be careful - never put old wall-mounted thermostats or fluorescent lightbulbs in the trash or recycling, as they contain mercury. Mercury is hazardous to human health, wildlife, and the environment. Handle these items carefully to avoid breakage and bring to one of many local free or low-cost collection sites.

Thermostats and other mercury items

Old wall-mounted thermostats contain a significant amount of liquid mercury. These thermostats are safe to use on the wall, but once removed, careful disposal is important. Free disposal is available at many local sites.

Handle items carefully, place in a sealed plastic bag, and hand to a staff member at one of the following sites. Keep thermostats intact; do not remove ampoules.

17 municipal transfer stations in Franklin County accept mercury-bearing items such as old wall-mounted thermostats, thermometers, switches, gauges, blood pressure monitors. Hand to attendant. The 17 transfer stations that accept thermostats and other mercury items are in Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Deerfield, Heath, Leverett, Montague, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Rowe, Shelburne, Warwick, Wendell, and Whately. Resident permits may be required.



Most old wall-mounted thermostats contain mercury. Look for an ampoule inside with silver liquid, handle carefully, and bring to a special drop-off site.

District residents of towns that do not have access to a municipal transfer station may utilize the “Super Sites” in Bernardston and Colrain. Any District resident may bring mercury-containing devices (thermostats, thermometers) free of charge. District residents may also pay small fees to dispose of common household hazardous waste (fluorescent light bulbs, used motor oil, antifreeze, oil-based paint). Locations, hours, and acceptable items: www.franklincountywastedistrict.org/supersites.html

Additional drop-off locations for mercury thermostats, such as plumbing/HVAC contractors and plumbing supply stores, are listed at: www.thermostat-recycle.org. All locations accept mercury thermostats for free.

Light bulbs

Fluorescent light bulbs contain mercury and should never be put in the recycling or trash. This includes the screw-in spiral compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), as well as straight “tube” lightbulbs and



“green-tipped” low mercury tubes. Examine the printing on the base of the bulb; it is a mercury bulb if it says “Hg” or “Contains Mercury.”

Home Depot stores offer free recycling for CFLs, or "light bulb sized" fluorescents. Lowe's Stores accept all sizes and shapes of fluorescents free of charge, including CFL, circular, and straight lamps.

Every transfer station in Franklin County accepts fluorescent light bulbs of all sizes; some may charge small fees (example: \$0.50 - \$1.00 each). Handle fluorescent bulbs carefully and hand to attendant. Access permits might be required. Also accepted at “Super Sites” - see info on “Super Sites” above.

LED, or “light emitting diode” bulbs do not contain mercury and can be put in the trash (wrap up to avoid accidental injuries) or recycled at one of the places listed above (if accepted there).

Incandescent or halogen light bulbs must go in the trash; no recycling is available. To avoid breakage and accidental injuries, wrap incandescent, halogen or LED light bulbs in used paper or plastic before placing them in the trash.

What to do if a mercury-containing item breaks

Fluorescent bulbs contain mercury vapor. If a fluorescent bulb breaks, the vapor can be harmful to human health and the environment. If you break a fluorescent bulb, get people and pets out of the area for 15 minutes. Ventilate: open doors or windows. After 15 minutes, put on gloves and scoop up the pieces with 2 pieces of cardboard. Use moist paper towels to clean up small pieces. Do not use a broom or vacuum. Put all pieces and paper towels in a plastic bag or closeable container, seal it, and bring to one of the collection sites above.

If a mercury ampoule breaks or liquid mercury is spilled, ventilate the area for 15 minutes. Evacuate people and pets. Do not use a vacuum cleaner or broom to clean up. Put on old clothes that can be discarded if contaminated with mercury. Wearing disposable gloves, collect droplets of mercury using two stiff pieces of paper or cardboard. Small drops can be picked up on tape. Place these items and the broken thermostat in a doubled plastic bag and seal tightly. Remove any contaminated clothing and bag and dispose. Remove and dispose of gloves. Contact the Franklin County Solid Waste District for disposal information.

For more information on any of these programs, or to learn more about recycling, composting, and hazardous waste disposal, contact the District office at info@franklincountywastedistrict.org, (413) 772-2438 or visit: www.franklincountywastedistrict.org. *MA Relay for the hearing impaired: 711 or 1-800-439-2370 (TTY/TDD). The District is an equal opportunity provider.*