

you can do it!

Carefully clean up after a CFL bulb is broken

One of the immutable laws of nature is that when you buy a light bulb there is the possibility of breaking a light bulb. The more you buy, the greater your opportunities for breaking.

When you clean up a broken incandescent bulb, your only risk is cutting yourself. When you break a compact fluorescent bulb (CFL), you have a very slight risk of mercury poisoning.

The EPA has very straightforward directions on what to do if you break a fluorescent or CFL bulb. Their directions are very simple and shouldn't cost more than \$1.

Here are the EPA's directions in case you break a bulb. You can download the EPA's complete file on cleaning up products that contain mercury from their Web site at www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/index.htm.

■ NEVER vacuum or sweep up the



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Supplies

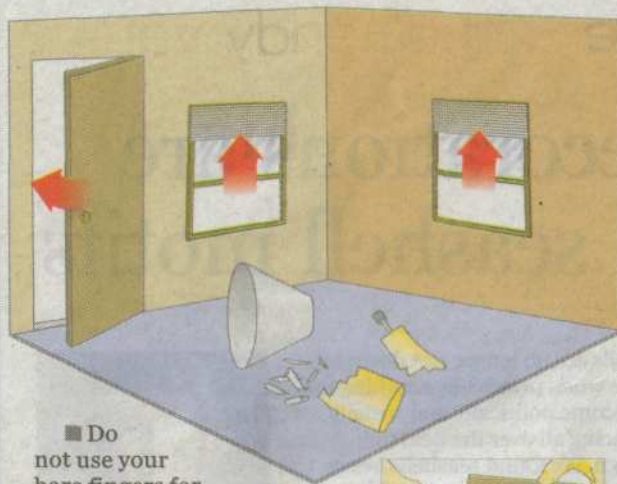
Materials needed: Stiff paper or cardboard, paper toweling, seal-top bags, plastic bag, tape.

Tools needed: Disposable rubber gloves (vinyl gloves, if necessary).

mess. This will just spread mercury throughout the room and increase mercury exposure. The appliance also will have become contaminated and will have to be thrown away.

■ As soon as the bulb breaks, open a window and clear the room.

■ Close the door and stay out for at least 15 minutes. This is very important because you want as much fresh, non-polluted air in the room as possible.

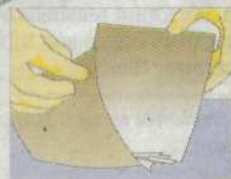


■ Do not use your bare fingers for clean-up. Put on disposable rubber gloves and carefully scoop up the fragments and powder with stiff paper or cardboard. Pour the particles into a plastic bag. Seal the bag.

■ Wipe the area clean with a damp paper towel.

■ Place all the materials into another plastic bag. Seal the bag.

■ Put all the bags you have used into a larger plastic bag. Seal that bag and store in an outside trash container or other outdoor protected area. Dispose of the bag during the next normal trash disposal day.



■ When done, wash your hands.

If the bulb broke on a carpet, it is a little bit more of a problem. The EPA instructions are to remove all the materials without using a vacuum cleaner, using the directions I just gave you.

Use a sticky tape, like duct tape, to pick up any remaining small pieces or powder.

If you must vacuum the area, do so after clean-up. Immediately remove the vacuum bag or empty and wipe the canister and put into two plastic sealed bags and store outside.

If you have a question, call the "Handyman Show" with Glenn Haege at (866) ASK GLENN noon-2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The show can be heard locally on WJR-AM (760) and more than 160 radio stations nationwide. To suggest a question for Haege's Wednesday "Ask Glenn" column at detnews.com, write: Ask Glenn, Master Handyman Press, P.O. Box 1498, Royal Oak, MI 48068-1498, or e-mail askglenn@masterhandyman.com.