



Zero Waste Alliance

Compact Fluorescent Lamp Recycling

Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) have been widely promoted by electric utilities and energy efficiency groups because they produce the same amount of light as standard incandescent bulbs while using up to 75% less energy and lasting up to ten times as long. During the energy crisis of 2001, 6.8 million CFLs were sold in stores and another 1.3 million were given away by electric utilities in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. CFLs help reduce the pollution associated with energy production, but because they also contain about 5 mg of mercury per bulb, they may introduce another environmental problem. Mercury is toxic and once released into the environment it can accumulate in living organisms and travel up the food chain where it reaches high concentrations in fish and other marine life. Proper recycling ensures the benefits of CFLs while properly managing the disadvantages.



A group of sponsors that includes Portland General Electric, PacifiCorp, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Metro, Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, Bonneville Power Administration, Clark Public Utility District and Eugene Water and Electric Board have commissioned Zero Waste Alliance (ZWA) to lead the creation of a pilot project to recycle CFLs in Oregon and/or Washington and potentially the region.



The group is designing a program that will provide households with a convenient way to recycle their burned out CFLs. A similar program is already operating in Minnesota that lets residents leave CFLs at any of hundreds of retail stores in the state. Another program in Indiana accepts tubes at selected Sears stores. The technology already exists to separate the glass, phosphor powder, mercury and other materials in CFLs for recycling, but there is not yet a *convenient* system for bulb collection in Oregon and the Northwest. This program will create a convenient way for CFL users to deposit their burned out CFLs for recycling and thereby help protect the environment.

The pilot project is scheduled to begin in 2003 in selected areas of Oregon and/or Washington. It will encompass promotion and implementation of the collection system for CFL recycling as well as public education about the need to recycle CFLs. It is expected that a permanent CFL recycling system will be put in place after the completion of the pilot project, depending on results, and that the program model will be replicable in other parts of the United States.

The expected benefits of this project include:

- Convenient recycling method for household CFLs
- Increased economic activity from the promotion of energy efficient products
- A replicable model for other states or regions to use when implementing CFL recycling
- The reduction of one of the sources of mercury to landfills
- Improvement in the environment for human health and ecosystem protection

For more information about this ZWA project, please contact Alex Keith at the Zero Waste Alliance, One World Trade Center, 121 SW Salmon Street, Suite 210, Portland, Oregon 97204, T: 503-279-9383, F: 503-279-9381 akeith@zerowaste.org



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