



# Save energy with long-lasting compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs

In less than a minute, consumers can make a lasting difference in how much electricity they use. By purchasing compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs, an investment is made that will produce long-term savings and help the environment.

While CFL bulbs cost more up front, they use about 75 percent less energy and can last 10 times longer than incandescent light bulbs. A single CFL bulb can save consumers \$30 or more over its lifespan. Since many retail outlets sell these light bulbs, it is an easy and simple way that residential consumers can make a difference.

According to the 18Seconds partnership ([www.18seconds.org](http://www.18seconds.org)) – whose name is based on the mere 18 seconds it takes to replace a light bulb – if every American replaced a 60 watt bulb with a 13 watt Energy Star labeled CFL bulb, \$8 billion in energy costs would be saved.

## Choosing the right CFL bulb

A good rule of thumb is to use about a three to one ratio when comparing the wattage of an incandescent light bulb to a CFL bulb. For example, look for CFLs of between 13 and 20 watts to replace a 60-watt incandescent light bulb. Consumers may need to try several types and wattages of CFL bulbs to find which amount of lighting best meets their needs.

While manufacturers are improving the technology behind CFL bulbs, consumers should be aware of some limitations. For example, for outdoor lights and those with a dimmer, special CFL bulbs should be chosen that are appropriate for those types of lighting fixtures.

CFL bulbs should typically not be used in ceiling fans since the fan vibration can shorten the lifespan of the bulbs. Special Energy Star ceiling fan kits are available. Some consumers also have expressed

concern about the brightness of CFL bulbs. The current models make significant improvements over the older generations of fluorescent bulbs which flickered and distorted colors.

Many Ohio utilities offer discounts on CFL bulbs through their energy efficiency programs. Consumers should call their local utilities to find out more about the programs available to help improve home efficiency.

## Disposing of CFL bulbs safely

All CFL bulbs contain a trace amount of mercury which is small enough in amount to fit on the tip of a ball point pen. This equates to about 1/125th of that found in an older household thermometer. Even though CFL bulbs contain mercury, the use of these bulbs helps to prevent mercury from entering the environment. With the electricity saved by using CFL bulbs, electric generating power plants produce less electricity resulting in less mercury emissions being released.

As a result of the mercury, some states have passed laws prohibiting these bulbs from being disposed of in the trash. According to federal solid waste rules, CFL bulbs used in residential locations are not legally considered hazardous waste, although it is still better for the environment to recycle the bulbs.



In Ohio, some consumers have the ability to dispose of bulbs at a hazardous waste disposal site. Information on where you can dispose of expired CFL bulbs is available at [www.Earth911.com](http://www.Earth911.com). If there are no recycling locations nearby, consumers should place the bulbs in a plastic bag to prevent potential mercury leaks and place it in the regular trash. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) offers information on available recycling sites on its website, [www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org).

**For additional information from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel:**

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