Basis of Design

The purpose of this section is to provide the guidelines for the development of specifications for the recycling of fluorescent lights and disposal of lighting ballasts.

Overview

Fluorescent lights contain mercury and must be recycled according to federal and state law. Whole fluorescent light tubes can be recycled and are much cheaper to dispose of than broken light tubes which are hazardous waste, so take care to ensure the tubes remain intact during removal and storage. Fluorescent light ballasts may contain PCBs and must be disposed of in accordance with state and federal regulations.

Fluorescent lights

Whole fluorescent light tubes from projects in the Seattle area are recycled through Recycling & Solid Waste. See the Recycling & Solid Waste website at http://www.uwrecycling.com/request/fluorescent or call 206-685-2811 for more information and to request service. Initiate this process at minimum one week prior to the scheduled removal of lamps.

For construction projects at UW Bothell and UW Tacoma, the local Facilities Services arrange for billing and delivery of fluorescent tube containers. For contact information, call EPO at 206.616.0595 at a minimum one week prior to the scheduled removal of lamps.

For other offsite locations, the EH&S Environmental Programs Office (EPO) will arrange directly with the recycling contractor for services. Call EPO at 206.616.0595 email chmwaste@u.washington.edu at a minimum one week prior to the scheduled removal of lamps.

In any location, the fluorescent tube recycling contractor will drop off and subsequently pick up the appropriate number of fiber drums at the project location on specified dates. The project will be billed directly for tube recycling. Fluorescent tubes must be managed under the state Universal Waste rules. This means that all fluorescent tube drums must be labeled as Universal Waste (usually the recycling contractor does this, but it is the ultimate responsibility of the Project Manager to label them.) The drums must also be under the generator's control at all times and must be stored at a covered or indoor site.

Broken bulbs are disposed of as hazardous waste through EPO.

Ballasts

Fluorescent light ballasts may contain PCBs and must be disposed of in accordance with state and federal regulations. All ballasts manufactured through 1978 contain PCBs. Ballasts manufactured after 1978 still may contain PCBs. All fluorescent light ballasts that are not specifically labeled "No-PCBs" are assumed to contain PCBs. PCB-containing ballasts are hazardous waste and need to be managed through EPO. They can be shipped directly from site and recycled through the WA State Hazardous Waste Service Contract. Please call the PCB Coordinator at 206.616.5837 to make arrangements.

Electronic ballasts and ballasts that are labeled "No-PCBs" can be put in the trash if they have plastic covers or recycled with scrap metal if they have metal covers.

Leaking PCB ballasts are hazardous waste and will be managed through EPO. Any residual contamination must be cleaned up.

For more information or advice about leaking ballasts, contact at the PCB Coordinator at 206.616.5837.