

Food Service Quarterly Newsletter

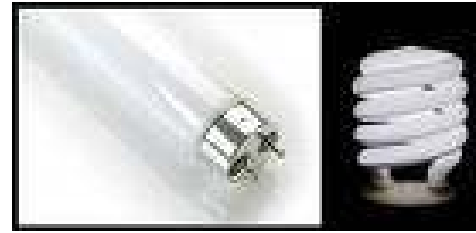
July - September 2008



The LMAS District Health Department is proud to present this quarter's newsletter. Inside you will find information on mercury containing light bulbs and properly balanced ventilation hood systems. We hope that you find the following information beneficial.



Did You Know These Light Bulbs Contain Mercury?



The light bulbs pictured above are commonly referred to as compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), are important energy savers, and are being widely substituted for less efficient incandescent light bulbs. It is important to know that CFLs contain small amounts of elemental mercury. The amount of elemental mercury contained within the bulbs varies between 1mg to 30mg of elemental mercury depending on the manufacturer of the bulbs. A broken CFL can produce mercury vapor levels well in excess of current federal guidelines, at least for brief periods. The amount of mercury released by a broken CFL will depend upon the brand of the bulb, when the bulb was made (newer bulbs generally have less mercury), and how much the bulb has been used (mercury vapor levels decline with use). It is important to avoid breaking a CFL bulb. When installing or removing a bulb, turn it by gripping the base, avoid twisting the glass tubes. Be aware of the risks of breakage once the bulb's useful life is over and is ready to be discarded. A bulb that is simply thrown in the trash can easily break and result in exposure to mercury vapor. When discarding this type of bulb ensure that they are placed in a sturdy container before being placed in the trash. It is wise to anticipate that you or a staff member may break a CFL bulb now and then, and to keep clean-up guidelines handy just in case.

CLEAN-UP GUIDELINES FOR CFL BULBS:

1. Don't panic. While there is some risk from exposure to the mercury vapor, the risk is comparatively small, and promptly and properly cleaning up the broken bulb can greatly reduce or eliminate the risk.
2. Close off the area to employees and/or guests to avoid spreading the mercury.
3. Ventilate the breakage area immediately for a minimum of 15 minutes. Close the door and open the windows in the room and let the air flow out taking the mercury vapor with it. If you have a forced hot air furnace, use plastic bags and duct tape to cover the vents in the room, to keep airflow from spreading the mercury vapor throughout the building.
4. Clean up the debris from the broken bulb promptly (do NOT allow a pregnant employee to complete this task due to the increased dangers to the fetus). Pick up broken glass pieces and other debris using rubber gloves or gently sweep debris onto a stiff piece of paper or cardboard, using another piece of paper or disposable item (do NOT use a broom, a brush, a dustpan, a vacuum, or a mop as this would disperse mercury in other parts of your establishment).
5. When pieces that can be gathered up by the methods described above have been collected, pat the carpet or floor with duct tape or masking tape (wrapped around a piece of cardboard, sticky-side-out), to pick up small particles.
6. Wipe the affected area down carefully with a moist paper towel or commercial wet-wipe.

7. Place the pieces of the broken bulb in a container that can be tightly sealed. Items that won't fit into a jar and don't have sharp edges can be sealed inside a pair of zip-lock bags, one inside the other.
8. Dispose of the container and zip-lock bags in the dumpster outside.
9. Wash your hands thoroughly before returning to work.
10. Continue to vent the breakage area for 15 minutes more before allowing employees or patrons back into the area.

Health Effects

Initial:

- Headaches, chills, fever
- Chest tightness, coughs
- Hand tremors
- Nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea

Prolonged Exposure:

- Personality changes
- Decreased vision or hearing
- Peripheral nerve damage
- Elevated blood pressure

Information for this article came from the Michigan Department of Community Health and The Mercury Project www.mercurypolicy.org.



Unbearably Hot Kitchens

Is the kitchen in your food service establishment sweltering hot? Do your employees working on the grills and cooking lines look as if they may fall over from heat exhaustion at any moment? If you have answered yes to either of these two questions then it is time to ask yourself, when was the last time the ventilation hoods were air-balanced? All ventilation systems are required to be air-balanced when they are first installed. However over time due to changes in equipment under the hood and the removal of spacers located between the filters these systems often become unbalanced. Improperly balanced hoods are often the culprits when refrigeration units located in the cooking area are not holding proper temperature. These cold holding units, although they are commercial grade, are not designed to be able to withstand excessively hot kitchen temperatures. A kitchen that contains a properly balanced ventilation hood system will maintain an ambient air temperature of 80F or below. If you are operating with an excessively hot kitchen, do your employees and your cold holding equipment a favor. Have your ventilation hood air-balanced.