

Nonprofit and corporate effort to put safety info on lightbulbs with mercury

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A recent Federal Trade Commission (FTC) ruling requiring all compact fluorescent light bulb manufacturers to provide information on proper handling and cleanup of broken bulbs grew out of a shareholder resolution sponsored by the nonprofit **As You Sow**.

The FTC rule, which takes effect in mid-2011, mandates new packaging to help consumers choose the proper bulb as less energy-efficient, incandescent bulbs are phased out. The new rule also requires indications on bulbs as to whether they contain mercury -- as all do -- and to include a link to a website with instructions for cleanup, recycling and disposal.



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While the bulbs have become popular during the past few years among consumers looking to reduce electricity bills and "go green," **As You Sow** was concerned consumers were unaware of their potential for mercury poisoning.

"There is mercury vapor in these bulbs and even though it is a small amount, it requires that they be cleaned up in special way -- not like an incandescent bulb," said **Amy Galland, As You Sow's Research Director**, in a statement. "We believed that product labeling regarding mercury content and cleanup instructions would be an excellent way to ensure consumer safety."

As You Sow, whose mission is to promote corporate responsibility via shareholder advocacy, started talking to lighting industry giant General Electric, which it says shared the group's concerns about CFL safety and agreed to lead an industry-wide initiative.

After discussion with other members of the National Electrical Manufacturers Association, GE filed comments with the FTC in December 2009 urging it to include a disclosure of mercury content and a web link to cleanup information on all compact bulb packaging -- both of which were included in the FTC rule.

"This FTC ruling is a testament to the power of the shareholder process when investors, nonprofit organizations, corporations and the government come together to take action on consumer protection," said Timothy Smith, Senior Vice President, Environment, Social, and Governance Group, Walden Asset Management, and past president of the Social Investment Forum, in a statement.

To learn more about proper cleanup, recycling, and disposal of compact bulbs, visit this page on the Environmental Protection Agency web site.