



NEWS RELEASE

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Legislature passes bill to phase out most toxic light bulbs; Vermont first state to ban common 4-foot fluorescent tubes

MONTPELIER, VT – Today, the Vermont Senate followed in the footsteps of House of Representatives in adopting legislation to ban sales of 4-foot linear fluorescent light bulbs starting January 1, 2024. 4-foot linear fluorescent light bulbs are by far the most common type of fluorescent bulb, covering about 90% of fluorescent installations, including in most offices, schools, and other indoor spaces. Climate, environment and health advocates applauded the vote.

“Vermonters no longer need to tolerate fluorescent lighting, which contains mercury, a potent neurotoxin,” said Michael Bender, Director of the Mercury Policy Project. “By passing this legislation, Vermont is making a clear statement that it will not accept outdated and toxic technologies when safer, more efficient bulbs are widely available.”

According to a Clean Lighting Coalition [report](#) published by advocates last October, fluorescent lamps release mercury when broken, resulting in negative environmental and human health impacts. Breakages in shared spaces like homes, schools and hospitals pose increased health risks to vulnerable groups like pregnant women, infants and others with chemical sensitivities.

“Who wants to put toxic mercury lighting in their homes, day care centers, schools, offices, hospitals, or shops when they don’t have to?” said Paul Burns, Executive Director of VPIRG. “LED alternatives are available, cost-effective, are mercury free and offer better quality light than fluorescents.”

Experts say that in the great majority of cases, efficient LED retrofit solutions are widely available and can save Vermont residents and businesses money year after year, since the LED bulb cuts electricity costs in half.

[A new study](#) from the Appliance Standards Awareness Project found a typical school could see \$24,000 in lifetime savings from transitioning to LEDs. Further, by 2040 Vermont could see savings of \$167 million in reduced utility bills thanks to just over 1,000 gigawatt hours of saved electricity due to transitioning the 4-foot fluorescents.

“Based on our analysis of drop-in retrofit LED bulb prices in Vermont, we concluded that an LED bulb can pay for itself 5 times over in electricity bill savings over its lifespan,” said Brian Fadie of the Appliance Standards Awareness Project. “Clearly LED is the lowest cost option today.”

In response to consumer advocates petition last Fall and a subsequent review, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources issued a determination in February that will end the sale of screw-based mercury-containing compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs). This restriction on sale will begin on February 17, 2023, to allow Vermont retailers and distributors sufficient time to sell any existing inventories.

“We applaud the leadership of Vermont’s legislators in setting phase-out dates for the most common fluorescent lighting technologies in state”, said Ana Maria Carreño, Deputy Director of the Clean Lighting Coalition. “There is no place for mercury in lighting today, especially when LED alternatives offer better performance, coupled with climate and environmental benefits”.

Government around the world are increasingly recognizing LEDs as the foremost lighting technology on the market today. On Dec. 16, the European Union [banned](#) the sale of almost all mercury-containing fluorescent lamps by September 2023, and in March, 137 governments voted to phase out CFLs by 2025 through [the Minamata Convention on Mercury](#).

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For more information:

Vermont ANR determination: <https://dec.vermont.gov/content/10-vsa-%C2%A77152a6-sale-mercury-containing-lamps-final-determination-notice>

European Commission ban on fluorescent lamps: <https://www.eceee.org/all-news/news/eu-commission-adopts-regulation-to-ban-fluorescent-lighting-by-september-2023/>

About the Mercury Policy Project: Founded in 1998, the Mercury Policy Project promotes policies to eliminate mercury use and reduce mercury exposure. To learn more, visit www.mercurypolicy.org

About the Appliance Standards Awareness Project (ASAP): ASAP organizes and leads a broad-based coalition effort that works to advance, win and defend new appliance, equipment and lighting standards which deliver large energy and water savings, monetary savings and environmental benefits. To learn more, visit <https://appliance-standards.org>

About the Responsible Purchasing Network: RPN is an international network of buyers dedicated to socially responsible and environmentally sustainable purchasing. To learn more, visit <http://www.responsiblepurchasing.org/>

About VPIRG: The Vermont Public Interest Research Group is Vermont’s largest consumer and environmental advocacy organization with more than 40,000 members and supporters across the state. To learn more, visit www.vpirg.org

For more information about the transition away from mercury-based lighting, visit <https://cleanlightingcoalition.org/benefits/>