

Mercury Containing Lights Recycling Program Changes Focus Sheet

Overview

On March 28, 2024, Governor Inslee signed House Bill 1185¹ which updated two laws related to the sale, collection, and disposal of mercury containing lights sold within the state of Washington. The changes will impact the LightRecycle Program². The original law that created LightRecycle contained a clause that would have ended the program in 2025. Allowing the program to end would have eliminated safe and convenient options for Washington residents to manage mercury containing lights when they reach end of life. In addition to extending the program, the bill made further changes which are summarized below.

Ban on Sale of Mercury Containing Lights

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 70A.230.020³ was amended to include a ban on the sale of mercury containing lights. Beginning on January 1, 2029, the sale of compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) and linear fluorescent lamps is prohibited within the state of Washington. The prohibition does not apply to lamps already in stock at in-state stores on January 1, 2029. However, lamps already in stock at stores must be sold within six (6) months. These lamps can no longer be sold after July 1, 2029⁴.

The sales ban does NOT apply to the following types of mercury containing lights:

- Special purpose bulbs including:

- Lamps for image capture such as for copying machines
- Lamps with a high proportion of UV light
- Lamps for germicide/disinfection/fly trapping
- Lamps for generating ozone
- Lamps for growing coral symbioses
- Sun lamps
- Lamps for medical/veterinary treatment, diagnosis, or medical devices
- Lamps for manufacture and quality control of pharmaceutical products
- Lamps for spectroscopy
- Lamps for research by academic institutions
- CFLs to replace lamps in vehicles manufactured before January 1, 2020
- Bulbs for research and medical equipment
- “Casual sale” of mercury containing lamps

Enforcement of Sales Ban

RCW 70A.230.020 allows Ecology to adopt rules for implementation, administration, and enforcement and provides Ecology with enforcement authority. For each first violation a penalty of up to \$1,000 may be assessed. Repeat violations may be assessed a penalty of up to \$5,000.

Potential violations include, but are not limited to:

- Selling prohibited lights that were added to a store’s stock after January 1, 2029
- Selling any prohibited lights after July 1, 2029

¹<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1185&Year=2023&Initiative=false>

² <https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/our-recycling-programs/mercury-lights>

³ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.230.020>

⁴ RCW 70A.230.020(5)

Increased Daily Drop Off Limits

RCW 70A.230.020 establishes limits to the number of mercury-containing lights that a person can bring to a collection location under the LightRecycle Program. The daily recycling limits for mercury-containing lights was increased from no more than ten (10) bulbs to the limits listed below. New daily limits take effect on January 1, 2025.

- **Unlimited** screw base compact fluorescent lamps



- **Fifteen (15)** pin-based compact or linear fluorescent lamps



- **Two (2)** High intensity discharge lamps



Emergency Response and Safety

The bill also added new safety related items to the list of topics that must be addressed in stewardship plans that direct LightRecycle program operations⁵. Stewardship plans will need to be updated and collection locations will need to be provided with the following required materials:

- Spill/release response plans for use by collection locations
- Worker safety plans for use by collection locations

Funding Changes

The program is currently funded by an environmental handling charge (EHC) assessed on the sale of each mercury containing light sold at retail. The EHC may not be charged starting January 1, 2029 and at that time, producers must fully fund the LightRecycle Program⁶.

Important Dates

- Bulb limit increase — January 1, 2025
- EHC may not be charged — January 1, 2029
- Sales ban takes effect — January 1, 2029
- Becomes illegal to sell existing inventory — July 1, 2029

Additional Resources

For more information please visit the [Department of Ecology's website](#)⁷ for the mercury lights stewardship program, as well as [LightRecycle's webpage](#)⁸.



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⁵ RCW 70A.505.040(2)(g)

⁶ RCW 70A.505.050

⁷ <https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-recycling-waste/our-recycling-programs/mercury-lights>

⁸ <https://www.lightrecycle.org/>