

## Clearing up misconceptions: CFL bulbs and fire hazards

### Do compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs pose a fire hazard?

No. Using CFL bulbs in your home actually reduces the threat of fire caused by lighting fixtures because CFL bulbs operate at lower temperatures than incandescent bulbs. Many fires have been caused by high wattage incandescent bulbs in ceiling fixtures melting insulation on wires, leading to electrical arcing. CFL bulbs, regardless of wattage, do not get hot enough to melt surrounding materials.

### What certifications should I look for on CFL bulbs?

Always look for the UL symbol (UL with a small C beside it) on your CFL bulb; this is the logo of Underwriters Laboratory, the product compliance firm that evaluates plastics for flammability characteristics. UL certification is equivalent to CSA (Canadian Standards Association); in fact, CSA defers to the UL's specifications as the best international standard. Also, always look for the ENERGY STAR logo on CFL packaging, because the specification means the product meets strict specifications for quality, including long life, colour and brightness as well as energy efficiency. The Globe Electric bulbs that *Project Porchlight* distributes are both UL and ENERGY STAR certified.

### Will mounting CFL bulbs in recessed fixtures pose a fire hazard?

No. CFL bulbs do generate some heat when they are operated, but this does not mean they cannot be used in recessed or enclosed fixtures. While you should never mount a CFL in an 100% *airtight* fixture, they are safe to use in common household fixtures, recessed, enclosed, and otherwise. If a CFL bulb cannot be enclosed, it will specify this restriction on the ballast. The Globe Electric CFL bulbs *Project Porchlight* distributes are UL-certified safe to use in enclosed fixtures.

### Will my CFL bulbs burn out prematurely if I mount them in recessed or enclosed fixtures?

Some CFL bulbs will burn out prematurely when mounted in recessed and enclosed fixtures, as the infrared heat they produce does not dissipate optimally in this configuration. However, new Energy Star specifications are now designating fixtures that do not exceed the CFL's maximum temperature requirements. By matching up ENERGY STAR certified fixtures with your CFL bulbs, you will get the full life out of your lamps.

### Why do CFL bulbs sometimes smoke when they burn out?

It is normal for some CFL bulbs to smoke a little and even show signs of melted plastic on the ballast at the end of their lives. When CFL bulbs burn out, heat builds up in the ballast (the plastic base of the lamp). As this occurs, the lamp's safety feature kicks in: the Voltage Dependent Resistor (VDR) is an electronic component that cuts the circuit (like a circuit breaker) in the lamp when the ballast heats up. In the nanoseconds it takes for the VDR to do its job, both it and the ballast might smoke a little. This is absolutely normal, and part of the lamp's design. The Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) certifies CFL bulbs (including their VDRs) that are constructed with plastics that do not pose a fire hazard when overheated.

Regardless of the type of bulb you are installing, CFL or incandescent, always turn the power off when you are changing light bulbs.



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