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## REAL ESTATE

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POSTED: JAN. 3, 2010

# Compact fluorescents are worth the money to install

BY JAMES DULLEY

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**Dear Jim:** The price of compact fluorescent bulbs has come down, and I am ready to try them. Do they really save as much as is advertised? Which ones provide the best light quality, and how do I dispose of old ones? -- **Mike J.**

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**Dear Mike:** Compact fluorescent lights (CFL) do save as much electricity, and therefore money on your utility bills, as advertised. I use CFLs in nearly every lighting fixture in my home. In the typical home, lighting with standard incandescent bulbs accounts for about 20% of your energy usage.

Not too many years ago, the cost of a CFL was about \$20. Even at that high price, using them made economic sense. Now with the cost at only a couple of dollars or less, switching to CFLs is a no-brainer. Along with the lower cost, the quality of the light from CFLs has improved.

A CFL uses about one-quarter as much electricity as an incandescent bulb to produce the same amount of light. Keep in mind, wattage of any light bulb refers to how much electricity it uses, not how much light it produces. The light output is measured in lumens and should be listed on the packaging.

Most CFLs contain about 4.0 milligrams, or mg, of mercury and some new designs have only 1.5 mg. The majority of lead released into the air is from burning coal to produce electricity. Using a 13-watt CFL instead of a 60-watt incandescent bulb saves enough electricity over its life to reduce mercury emission from burning coal in the electric power plant by 4.5 mg.

Even considering the above fact, when a CFL needs to be replaced, it is wise to dispose of it properly so the mercury is not released. Contact your local waste collection service for a CFL drop-off location.

*James Dulley's column, which appeared weekly in our newspaper, will now appear monthly. Contact him at [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com)*



Several common styles of compact fluorescent lights for lamps and recessed fixtures. The prices make them a no-brainer for the home. (FULL SPECTRUM SOLUTIONS)

A version of this story appears on page 1E of the Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010, print edition of the Detroit Free Press.

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