

Compact Fluorescent Lamp Myths

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 is an energy policy law that consists mainly of provisions designed to increase energy efficiency and the availability of renewable energy. Amongst several of its measures, one is to phase out incandescent light bulbs by 2014 and replace them with more energy efficient models. Although no specific technology is mandated to replace incandescent bulbs, CFLs are one of the leading technologies based on its energy efficient lighting and availability to the public market. However, some consumers have concerns regarding CFLs.

The [Electric Power Research Institute](#) (EPRI), a nonprofit organization that conducts research on electricity usage, has provided some insight to the myths and concerns of CFLs as noted below.

Myth: Unlike incandescent bulbs, CFLs cannot be used in 3-way fixtures.

Fact: Manufacturers produce CFLs that can be used for 3-way fixtures. Depending on the requirements for your specific fixture, manufacturers provide a range of 3-way CFL bulbs that are compatible and can replace 3-way incandescent bulbs. Some 3-way CFLs offered today include:



12/23/29 Watt CFL equivalent to 50/100/150 Watt incandescent
14/19/32 Watt CFL equivalent to 40/75/150 Watt incandescent

Myth: Dimmable CFLs do not work with any standard line dimmers.

Fact: Dimmable CFLs available on the market work with many dimmers, but not all are compatible with all standard line dimmers. Be sure to note that dimmable CFLs may have a different range in dimming, for example, some can dim from 100-10%, or from 90-30%. Try to conduct a table-top test for yourself to make sure a specific dimmable CFL works with your home equipment and to your needs.

Myth: Dimmable CFLs are too expensive and are hard to find.

Fact: Dimmable CFLs are becoming more widely available as old incandescent bulbs are phased out. In the past few years, CFL bulbs in general have become less expensive and more readily available through retail stores. The increase in demand will afford more varieties of dimmable CFL bulbs on the market, and may continue to drive prices down in the near future.

Myth: CFLs do not last as long as retailers advertise.

Fact: With proper installation and care, CFLs can last as long as advertised, longer than its incandescent equivalent and provide more energy savings. Be sure to carefully read its packaging to ensure your CFL is placed in the right fixture, whether it is a lamp socket or a recessed can. To prevent cracking, install a new CFL by grabbing it at the base instead of its bulb surface area. This will prevent any damage to the CFL or yourself, and ensures a long-lasting lamp for your fixture.

Myth: CFLs create more annoying flicker than incandescent bulbs.

Fact: CFLs do not cause an annoying level of flicker when in operation. In fact, all lamps exhibit some level of flicker, with two common types that occur because of external factors. A “power frequency flicker” occurs mostly in incandescent bulbs, since a CFL has a frequency several thousand times higher than its predecessor. The “line voltage flicker” is due to line voltage changes, which can occur when a large load (i.e. air conditioner) becomes active. These may or may not affect CFLs, since not all CFLs share the same sensitivity or exhibit flicker the same way.

Myth: CFLs are hard to dispose of properly, and the costs associated outweigh the energy savings.



Fact: CFLs contain a trace amount of mercury, less than a household thermometer or watch battery, but it remains important to properly dispose of old or damaged CFLs. There are several opportunities for safe disposal either through your local waste management provider, whether at home or at work, and free disposal through local retail suppliers. Online resources provide additional information and ways to dispose of CFLs properly, such as www.earth911.com.

Myth: CFLs cannot fit in specialized house fixtures, such as chandeliers or sconces.

Fact: The growing industry of CFLs provides various wattages and designs to fit most household needs, including specialized fixtures such as fans, candelabras, chandeliers, and wall sconces. Different designs allow consumers the opportunity to choose a look and style that matches their taste, while at the same time providing more energy efficiency.