



For Immediate Release

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County of Santa Clara, PG&E, and Local Businesses Launch Fluorescent Lamp Recycling Campaign

San Jose, CALIF. – Today, the County of Santa Clara, PG&E, and local retailers came together to launch the fluorescent lamp recycling campaign that encourages residents to properly dispose of used fluorescent lamps. Proper disposal of hazardous waste, such as fluorescent lamps, helps to protect the environment and public health.

“The partnership between the County, PG&E, and local retailers provides a convenient and safe way for residents to recycle their used fluorescent lamps,” said Supervisor Pete McHugh, Chair of the Board of Supervisors. “This partnership also helps to reduce the County’s financial responsibility of managing used fluorescent lamps.”

In February 2006, the state government banned the disposal of used fluorescent lamps in

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the trash as they contain traces of mercury. Since then, the County's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) program has expanded recycling opportunities to assist with the disposal of such lamps.

“By bringing used fluorescent bulbs, free of charge, to a convenient Retail Recycling Partner location, residents can be assured that these mercury containing items are recycled properly and safely,” said Greg Van Wassenhove, Director of the County of Santa Clara Department of Agriculture and Environmental Management.

Over the past two years, the County's HHW program has been actively recruiting local retailers to participate in this endeavor. As a result, 35 retail recycling partners have joined the program. These retailers place recycling boxes in their stores for the residents to drop used fluorescent lamps. When the boxes are full, HHW picks them up and sends them to a recycler.

“PG&E is very proud to partner with Santa Clara County on the promotion of fluorescent lamp recycling for the public,” said Rex Bell of PG&E's Environmental Services Department. “We look forward to the implementation of this partnership which combines the benefits of energy efficiency and environmental protection.”

In this campaign, PG&E allocates \$26,000 to cover the initial cost for promoting proper disposal of used fluorescent lamps in English, Spanish and Asian-languages newspapers. The company will also provide 50,000 Compact Fluorescent Bulb (CFL) recycling bags, at the cost of \$10,000 in total, at local stores for residents to use for free. Residents may simply place their used CFL in the bag and return it to one of the participating retailers. When the recycling bins are filled, they will be sent to the recycler at no cost to the County.

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“We encourage residents to use fluorescent lamps because they are more energy efficient and help to reduce electricity demands,” said Supervisor Liz Kniss, District 5, champion of the Extended Producer Responsibility Resolution. “It is equally important that the residents recycle such lamps at the end of their life because they contain traces of mercury which can be hazardous to our health and the environment.”

Background

In February 2006, the state of California banned hazardous wastes, including fluorescent lamps, from disposal in the trash, and created a Take-It-Back (TIB) Partnership to encourage governments, businesses, non-profit agencies, and non-governmental organizations to work in collaboration to promote and facilitate recycling of hazardous wastes generated by California households.

In May 2007, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors adopted an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Resolution to support efforts that require manufacturers to establish take back programs for their products, which will help reduce public costs and drive improvements in product design that promote environmental sustainability. As part of this effort, the County Household Hazardous Waste Program has been working on an outreach and education program with the business community to provide ways for residents to conveniently recycle fluorescent lamps.

PG&E has voluntarily joined the TIB Partnership and is now partnering with the County to provide funding for public outreach and recycling costs associated with the collection and recycling of fluorescent lamps.

*List of local retailers attached.

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