

Environment & Energy

New California Law Phases Out Fluorescent Lights to Save Energy

By Zach Bright

Sept. 20, 2022, 3:44 PM

- Measure saves on energy, costs, and carbon
 - Vermont passed similar phaseout in May
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A newly signed California law to ban the sale of mercury-containing compact fluorescent lamps and long fluorescent bulbs will mean big energy and cost savings, according to a study from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy.

With a phaseout under A.B. 2208, the Golden State is estimated by 2030 to save about 5,600 gigawatt hours, more than \$1 billion on electricity bills, and 950,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually, according to the research by ACEEE, a research and advocacy group. California's new law prohibits the sale of compact and long fluorescent bulbs of up to 8 feet starting in 2024.

California is the second state to phase out fluorescents. Vermont in May passed a law to phase out compact fluorescents in 2023 and 4-foot-long fluorescents in 2024.

At least two dozen states have passed legislation regulating mercury-added products, but none with the phaseouts required in Vermont and California.

"We are excited to see California pull ahead as a global leader in clean lighting," said Corinne Schneider, communications director of the Clean Lighting Coalition. "We hope California's move will generate some momentum, with other states taking action to protect people and the planet from fluorescent lighting."

Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) signed the bill into law on Sept. 18.

The measure also will mean a cumulative 1,503-pound reduction of mercury in lights shipped by 2050. Mercury is a substance linked to human and environmental health effects. A nationwide phaseout would avoid 16,000 pounds of mercury in lights shipped, the study found, as well as 208 million metric tons of CO2 emissions by 2050.

Increasingly available LEDs—light emitting diodes—have become a more cost-effective and efficient alternative than fluorescents.

The European Union passed a ban last year on the sale of almost all mercury-containing fluorescent lamps, effective September 2023. In March, 137 governments voted to phase out compact fluorescent bulbs by 2025 through the global Minamata Convention on Mercury.

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Sept. 16, 2022, 1:44 PM

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