

Media Release

4 February 2013

CASE test: Energy Saving Light Bulbs
One energy saving light bulb tested by CASE found to contain higher mercury content

Out of 10 energy saving light bulbs tested by CASE in September 2012, 1 (10%) failed the mercury test, and another 1 (10%) failed to produce the light output promised in its specifications.

Please refer to Annex A for more information.

One Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) known as “OSRAM Daylight” was found to contain mercury content exceeding the limits allowed by NEA. CASE has informed NEA on our findings and they have investigated into the case of exceedance of the limit.

With effect from Jul 2012, Pollution Control Department (PCD) under the National Environment Agency (NEA) controls the mercury content of CFLs under the Environmental Protection and Management Act (EPMA). Mercury content in CFLs should not exceed 5mg per hot cathode CFL. Lamps exceeding the stipulated limit are not allowed to be imported after 1 July 2012 for local use and distribution. NEA’s investigation showed that the CFL that exceeded the limit was imported before 1 July 2012, and form part of older stock that would be depleted over time. As lamps are currently disposed of as general wastes, such upstream controls on the importation would prevent long-term environmental damage due to the build up of mercury. According to international studies, while mercury is hazardous by inhalation, the small amount of mercury present in fluorescent lamps is unlikely to pose any significant health risks.

The result of the luminous flux measurement test showed that one of the CFLs labelled as “PowerPac Energy Saving Bulb, Model CP13” did not produce the light output as promised in its specifications. CASE is concerned as consumers might have been misled into purchasing the product by the high specifications stated. CASE has informed PowerPac on the test results and the onus is on them to reflect the accurate light output value.

CASE conducts regular tests on consumer products to keep tab of the low cost products sold in the market. Frequent testing ensures that businesses will uphold the quality and safety standards of their products. CASE is committed to protect the interest of consumers. We will continue to highlight any unfair/unsafe practices in the marketplace. At the same time, we also urge consumers to be more discerning and exercise caution to protect their own interests.

CASE commissioned the test because of the recent trend of consumers replacing incandescent lights with CFLs as they are thought to use less power, and have a longer rated life than incandescent lights. Although CFLs cost more to purchase, they can save consumers money through lower electricity costs over the life of the bulb if the bulbs are energy efficient. CASE wanted to ascertain that mercury levels in the bulbs were of acceptable levels, and that the performance of the bulbs is as promised. CFLs tested were purchased from both big retailers, e.g. BEST Denki, Courts etc. and small retailers such as neighbourhood shops.

With the test results, we can conclude that most companies have been keeping to the standards closely. CASE would like to urge manufacturers and distributors to ensure that their products comply with known standards. We also hope that manufacturers and distributors will provide accurate specifications and labelling on their products to prevent misleading consumers.

CASE advises consumers to exercise precaution when purchasing and using light bulbs. Consumers should always check for safety labels on the packaging before making the purchase. Extra caution should be exercised when handling light bulbs to prevent breakage. The small amount of mercury in bulbs might not be hazardous to your health; however, it is prudent to manage broken fluorescent lamps with care such as by minimizing exposure and avoiding direct contact. A used light bulb should be contained in a plastic bag or airtight container before disposal into the rubbish chute/bin.

In the event of a broken lamp, open the windows for ventilation and leave the room for about 15 minutes. At the end of the 15 minutes, use a broom to sweep up the broken pieces and put them into a plastic bag. Avoid using bare hands or a vacuum cleaner to pick up the broken pieces. Disposal of the broken bulb should be done using gloves and the broken remains cleared and sealed into a plastic bag. Next, wipe the affected area with a damp cloth and dispose of the damp cloth into the same bag. Finally, secure the opening of the bag and drop into the refuse chute or bin. Consumers may also refer to the Energy Efficient Singapore website for more information on cleaning up broken CFLs:

http://app.e2singapore.gov.sg/Households/At_Home_10_Energy_Challenge/Energy_Saving_Habits/FAQ_on_fluorescent_and_CFLs.aspx

It is advised to approach the relevant retail business should there be a need for further assistance.

Lim Biow Chuan
CASE President

For media queries, please contact:

Mr Seah Seng Choon
Executive Director
seahsc@case.org.sg
64611813/9821 6151

Ms Angelina Soh
Executive, Marketing & Communications
angelina.soh@case.org.sg
64611824

Ms Sheree Lieu
Executive, Marketing & Communications
sheree.lieu@case.org.sg
64611840

Consumers Association of Singapore:

The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) is an independent, non-profit organisation that is committed towards protecting consumers' interest through information and education, and promoting an environment of fair and ethical trade practices. One of its key achievements is in lobbying for Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (CPFTA) which came into effect on March 1, 2004.