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Home Depot to accept CFL bulbs at no cost

By Joe Truini

Home Depot has launched a comprehensive and, most importantly, free compact fluorescent lamp take-back program.

The Atlanta-based retailer will take back CFLs at no cost at all of its 1,973 North American locations. Customers simply drop off unbroken bulbs at the return desk, and Home Depot will recycle them through an environmental management firm.

"We are pleased that The Home Depot has taken this important step to join the national effort to improve the environment by recycling CFL bulbs in-store," said Scott Casse, executive director of the Product Stewardship Institute in Boston.

The retailer's Canadian stores launched a CFL recycling program in November.

Home Depot sold more than 75 million CFLs in 2007, according to the company. Those bulbs will

save Americans \$4.8 billion in energy costs and avoid 51.8 billion pounds of carbon dioxide over their lifetimes, said Ron Jarvis, senior vice president of environmental innovation for Home Depot.

Retailers such as Home Depot and Wal-Mart have promoted CFLs to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Wal-Mart sold 137 million of the curly bulbs last year. But concerns regarding disposal of the bulbs have arisen because they contain a tiny amount of mercury, about 2 to 5 milligrams, enough to fit on the tip of a pen.

Compact fluorescent bulbs use up to 75 percent less energy and last up to 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But until now, Ikea was the only U.S. retailer with a national CFL take-back program.

"Retailers play a key role in providing consumers with a con-

venient way to safely recycle CFLs and other products whose improper disposal can harm the environment," Casse said.

More than 75 percent of the households in the United States are located within 10 miles of a Home Depot store, making the program the nation's first widely available solution to recycle the bulbs, Jarvis said.

"The CFL recycling program is another example of how The Home Depot is empowering customers to help make a difference in their homes and have less of an impact on their environment," he said.

The company also will switch the bulbs in its light fixture showrooms in its U.S. stores to CFLs by the fall. The in-store energy conservation program will save the company \$16 million a year in energy costs, Jarvis said. ■

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