

This little light of mine...

The Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (both of Augusta) recently launched a state program for collecting and recycling compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) via retail outlets throughout the Pine Tree State. The program is the first of its kind in the U.S.

The long-lasting, energy efficient CFLs have become increasingly popular, with bans of standard incandescent bulbs being enacted or considered around the globe. The energy-saving bulbs, however, contain trace amounts of mercury, thus making them toxic to the environment and difficult to dispose of properly.

Maine residents can drop off non-broken, burned-out bulbs to retail stores as a part of the program. When the program-distributed container is filled, the retail outlet seals it and ships the bucket to a recycling facility. The PUC is paying for all aspects of the Efficiency Maine program.

A full list of participating stores and details about the program can be found online at www.energymaine.com.

Additionally, Motel 6 (Dallas) also is getting into the compact fluorescent recycling game by establishing the nation's first CFL and battery recycling program within the hospitality industry. The hotel chain began using CFLs exclusively in January 2006.

Motel 6's parent company, Accor North America (Dallas), has partnered with Oakleaf Waste Management (East Hartford, Connecticut) to oversee the program, and with Veolia Environmental Services (Lombard, Illinois) to process the discarded bulbs and batteries.

Not to be left out, Houston-based Waste Management recently acquired LampTracker, a provider of mail-back recycling for fluorescent lighting.

The business now will be a fully-owned subsidiary, operating as WM LampTracker, which provides sealed shipping containers to commercial and industrial customers for handling bulbs. More information about the program can be found online at www.wmlamptracker.com.