

An interesting thing is happening with energy savings. Reports are coming in about Californians reducing their electric consumption and lowering their energy bills. However, at the same time, the energy providers have found that they are producing less power and have less money in their budgets to spend or use as profits for shareholders. What a double edged sword.

Last Monday, VALCORE Recycling launch a program to help Vallejo residents save energy. Each household in Vallejo can bring up to five incandescent light bulbs and trade them for five Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs) while supplies last. We have over 6000 CFLs to share.

This exchange takes place at VALCORE Recycling located at 38 Sheridan Street (cross street is Solano) in south Vallejo. The hours of the exchange are Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 2:00p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Funding for this exchange was provided by the Solano County Board of Supervisors, Pacific Gas and Electric, Vallejo Sanitation and Flood Control District, and VALCORE Recycling. How does a CFL work?

An incandescent lightbulb is a simple circuit. An electrical charge travels into the lightbulb to a Tungsten wire filament. The electricity generates heat (thermal energy) which is released in the form of photons (light). Typical incandescent light bulbs last about 1,000 hours.

Instead of a filament, CFLs have a gas-filled tube and a ballast. The electrical charge flows through the ballast into the tube through the gas. That causes the gas to emit ultraviolet (UV) light not visible to the human eye. The UV light then energizes a phosphor coating on the inside of the tube which emits visible light. CFLs are estimated to have an average life of about 10,000 hours, depending on the wattage of the bulb.

So why switch?

The federal government's Energy Star program estimates that if every American household were to replace only one incandescent bulb with a CFL, it would save enough energy to light three million homes, and prevent the release of greenhouse gases equal to the emissions of 800,000 cars. A CFL uses approximately 75 percent less energy than an incandescent lightbulb for the same amount of light.

My husband and I have used CFLs since they came out years ago. The first CFLs cost up to \$9 per bulb so we learned quickly which fixtures they would go into. Lights that are only used for seconds, such as a hall or closet light, have incandescent bulbs. Lights in the kitchen which are one for longer periods of time, get the CFLs. Why? The ballast on the CFLs have a limited number of "one and off" switches in them and, while technically the bulb can last 10,000 hours, the ballast will not.

And a word of caution. California has outlawed putting CFL bulbs and fluorescent tubes in the trash as they have a small bead of mercury in them.

Used bulbs should be taken to our household hazardous waste collection site at the Devlin Road Transfer Station (Friday, Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) or Recology Vallejo (Vallejo Garbage) (Thursday to Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.).

If your CFL bulb breaks, follow these steps:

1. Air out the room, put on a pair of gloves and pick up the bulb with a piece of cardboard or sticky tape. Wipe the area clean with a disposable damp paper towel. If using a vacuum, only clean the area needed. Do not use a broom.
2. Place all pieces of the broken bulb in a sealed plastic bag or jar with a metal lid. This includes all materials used to clean up the bulb as well. Dispose of immediately only at a hazardous waste collection site.

Paper Shredding events.

Confidential Paper Shredding will be held on Saturday, November 21 and December 19 at VALCORE Recycling (38 Sheridan Street, Vallejo 707 645-8258) from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There is a charge of \$5 per twenty pounds (maximum: 100 pounds).

VALCORE Recycling Board Secretary Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit www.VALCORErecycling.org.

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