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FTC to Mandate Mercury Warnings on Compact Fluorescent Bulbs

Commission's Action Follows Efforts Begun by As You Sow with 2008 Shareholder Resolution

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) ruling on mercury labeling will require all compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) manufacturers to provide information on proper handling and cleanup when a CFL breaks in the home.

CFLs have gained in market share in recent years because of their energy efficiency. Amy Galland, Research Director of As You Sow, said, "Consumers have learned that CFLs use less electricity than incandescent bulbs, which is good for the environment. But as more CFL's entered the market we have been concerned that consumers do not fully appreciate the potential dangers if a CFL is broken. There is mercury vapor in these bulbs and even though it is a small amount, it requires that they be cleaned up in special way – not like an incandescent bulb. We believed that product labeling regarding mercury content and cleanup instructions would be an excellent way to ensure consumer safety."

Dialogue with General Electric (GE) led the company to conclude that the issue was important enough to become an industry-wide initiative. Starting in 2009 GE worked with other industry members in the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA). In December 2009 GE filed comments with the FTC urging it to include mercury content and a web link to cleanup information on all CFL packaging. It urged NEMA to do the same. In July 2010, the FTC issued a final rule to include mercury-content and a link to cleanup information on packaging for compact fluorescent light bulbs.

"This FTC ruling is a testament to the power of the shareholder process when investors, nonprofit organizations, corporations, and the government come together to take action on consumer protection," said Timothy Smith, Senior Vice President, Environment, Social, and Governance Group, Walden Asset Management and past-president of the Social Investment Forum.

To learn about proper cleanup, recycling, and disposal for CFLs, please visit: <http://epa.gov/cfl/>

As You Sow is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing corporate environmental and social responsibility. Since 1992, As You Sow has engaged in corporate dialogue, shareholder advocacy, grant making and innovative legal strategies, resulting in positive and continued impact to the environment. asyousow.org