The disposal of fluorescent light tubes has recently come under closer scrutiny throughout the country. Because they contain mercury, fluorescent tubes are classified as hazardous waste. Landfill operators have started closely monitoring loads for fluorescent lamps. It is not uncommon for landfills to reject loads in which they find tubes. Included with fluorescents are HID (high intensity discharge) lamps. These lamps are used in many outdoor applications.

EH&S has been given the responsibility to manage the campus fluorescent lamp recycling program for burned out tubes. Like other types of hazardous waste, fluorescent lights will be removed from OSU locations and taken to a central storage area prior to sending to a tube recycler.

Fluorescent tube manufacturers are changing production methods so that lower levels of mercury are injected into each lamp. Phillips, for example, has recently produced a green tipped Alto tube which does not contain enough mercury to be considered a hazardous waste. These green-tipped tubes can therefore legally be disposed of at landfills, although landfills have ultimate discretion over what they will accept. The Alto tube is currently only available in a four foot length.

Tubes are generally shipped in cardboard cartons of the appropriate length. As tubes are removed, collect them in original shipping cartons. (Be sure to save newly emptied cartons for future use. A few cartons are typically available from EH&S.) When boxes are full, leave a pickup request on the EH&S waste disposal pickup request site. Tubes are picked up one day per week.

The fluorescent tube recycling program has been financed for centrally-funded maintenance buildings. OSU auxiliary operations may be required to pay for collection and recycling costs.