Ultraviolet Emissions from Compact Fluorescent Lights

New research by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) has shown that some energy saving Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs can emit ultraviolet radiation which can lead to sunburn in some extreme circumstances.

Precautionary advice is that open (single envelope) CFLs (Fig. 1) should not be used where people are in close proximity (i.e. closer than 30 cm or 1 ft) to the bare light bulb for over 1 hour a day. For such situations open CFLs should be replaced by the encapsulated (double envelope) type (Fig. 2). Alternatively, the lamp should be moved so that it is at least 30 cm or 1 ft away.

Encapsulated (double envelope) compact fluorescent light bulbs (see Fig. 2), which look similar to traditional domestic light bulbs, do not emit significant amounts of ultraviolet radiation.

The larger long tube "strip lighting" design fluorescent lights, commonly used in offices, workplaces and homes for many years, can also be used on ceilings without any special precautionary measures.

It should be noted that exposure to UV radiation can cause particular problems for certain people who may suffer from some medical conditions, including Lupus.

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