



Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs Offer Savings in Energy, Supplies, Labor

By Tonya Vinas

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NATIONAL REPORT—Advances have made compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) more attractive to the lodging industry than when they first appeared, and prices have come down, but are they still a good value? Absolutely, say hoteliers and the companies that make CFLs.

“The quality [today] is excellent,” says Gabrielle Boose, CFL product manager for GE Consumer & Industrial, Lighting, Cleveland, Ohio. “A while back there were a lot of entries into the market, and their quality was questionable. But the market has weeded them out.”

Boose says today GE’s CFLs have a finish similar to incandescents. Brightness and color quality are constantly improving, and the bulbs are available in a wider variety. For instance, GE makes dimmable CFLs for can-type lighting fixtures in meeting rooms and offers ones that can be used outdoors without covering.

HEI Hospitality LLC of Norwalk, Conn., benefited from GE’s CLF technology in July 2005 when 7,300 fixtures at its 390-room Baltimore Marriott Hunt Valley Inn were retrofitted with T8 linear fluorescent lamps and UltraMax electronic ballasts.

“We’ve helped the hotel hit a 50 percent improvement in kilowatt savings alone,” says Richard G. Lubinski, president of Silver Lake, Ohio-based energy consulting firm Think Energy Management LLC, a consultant to HEI. “There’s also a tangible reduction in electrical demand peaks, lower maintenance hassles and lower costs whenever long-life lighting products are applied.”



Two of Osram Sylvania's latest CFLs.

According to Patrick M. Smith, compact fluorescent applications engineer for Osram Sylvania, Danvers, Mass., innovations in CFL have taken place at his company as well.

CFL Technology Improves

“In the last few years, Sylvania compact fluorescent lamps have advanced by becoming smaller and offering faster run-up to full brightness,” Smith says. “The number of lamp types has also significantly expanded. Smaller and brighter lamps are now available to replace 100-watt and 150-watt incandescent lamps.”

So what do these improvements mean for the lodging industry? Now that quality has been improved and price has come down (although initial costs are slightly more on a per-unit basis than incandescents), hoteliers should reconsider using CFLs because of cost savings in many areas.

“Sylvania compact fluorescent lamps offer lamp life that is typically eight times longer than that of a traditional incandescent lamp,” Smith says. “Beyond superior lamp life, these products use 75 percent less energy to produce the same amount of light. In most cases, the energy savings alone provided by these lamps pay for the product cost many times over.”

Boose points out that not only are hotels saving in hard costs because they are replacing bulbs less often, they also save on labor. It’s a hassle and time consuming for housekeeping and maintenance staff to replace burnt-out bulbs.

“The initial cost of light is more, but the payback comes quickly,” she says.

Indeed it does, says Tedd Saunders, co-owner and executive vice president of Boston-based Saunders Hotel Group and president of the consulting firm Ecological Solutions Inc.

“The hospitality industry is catching on that this is a good business strategy,” says Saunders, author of the book, ‘The Bottom Line of Green is Black: Strategies for creating profitable, environmentally sound businesses.’”

Saunders says his family’s company has been using CLFs at its three properties since 1989 and is retrofitting newly acquired properties. Saunders Hotel Group owns the Comfort Inn & Suites/Airport (Boston), The Lenox Hotel (Boston), The Copley Square Hotel (Boston), Hampton Inn (Norwood, Mass.), Hawthorn Suites (Alexandria, Va.), Holiday Inn (New London, Conn.), and Residence Inn by Marriott (Merrimack, N.H.).

Saunders says using CFLs is a “no brainer” because it gives hotels tremendous savings over time in terms of energy usage and replacement costs and makes for better security and higher-quality lighting because the bulbs last much longer. For hotels just starting to use CFLs, Saunders suggests going for a big payback early.

“The lights to change first are the ones with most frequent usage—in the back-of-the-house and public areas, for instance, which are on 24 hours a day,” he says. “In other words, don’t do the guestrooms first.”

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