Seven Lighting Legislation Myths Debunked

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By W.W. GRAINGER

As 2011 begins to come to an end, it is a good time for businesses to evaluate facility lighting and prepare for the U.S. Department of Energy's energy-efficiency legislation that will go into effect in 2012. The legislation will mandate that lighting manufacturers cease the production of non-efficient lighting and related products, which will change the way that facilities consume energy and maintain lighting.

Grainger, a broad line distributor of maintenance, repair and operating (MRO) products, debunks seven myths surrounding the lighting legislation and outlines some tools and resources that can help businesses ease into the transition.

"There are plenty of myths out there that are causing some confusion and ambiguity surrounding the legislation, which could end up putting some businesses at a disadvantage," said John McDermott, Brand Strategy Manager of Sustainability, Grainger. "The lighting legislation is a unique opportunity for businesses to be more financially and operationally efficient, and facilities should embrace this shift and reap the benefits."

Myth #1: The legislation won't impact commercial businesses as much as it will impact consumers.

Fact: The legislation will impact both residential and commercial buildings … and soon! Effective January 1, 2012, standard 100-W bulbs will require an increase of 30 percent in efficiency and can no longer be manufactured for sale in the U.S. The requirements will also apply to 75- (effective 2013), 60- and 40-W lights (effective

2014).

For fluorescent tubes and parabolic aluminized reflector (PAR) bulbs, lighting that is found throughout most commercial buildings, the legislation is slated to go into effect on July 14, 2012.

Myth #2: The only monetary return your business will get from making the switch to efficient lighting is the decrease in energy usage.

Fact: While energy and productivity savings from efficient bulbs are an obvious monetary benefit to making the switch, businesses can also take advantage of utility rebates that may be available at the state and local level for additional savings. To find out what incentives are available in your area, visit www.dsireusa.org [1], which lists information on state, local, utility and federal incentives, and policies that promote renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Myth #3: All lighting within a commercial facility will require costly retrofits to accommodate the shape and design of energy-efficient lighting.

Fact: While a significant amount of lighting that is unique to a commercial building, such as fluorescent tubes and PAR bulbs, will need some kind of retrofit, not all types of lighting will require a full modification. Halogen and incandescent bulbs, for example, can simply be replaced by newer technology, such as compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) and light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs, with no retrofit required.

Myth #4: Making the switch to energy-efficient LED lighting is very expensive and will put a financial strain on your business.

Fact: While LED lighting is more costly than its inefficient counterparts at the onset of installation, the return over time can be significant. Not only can your business experience the cost savings that come with reducing energy consumption, but productivity levels may also increase as you will no longer have to address lighting maintenance as frequently due to the longer lifespan of LED replacement bulbs. No-cost resources are available to help you better understand the savings potential for your business, such as savings calculators and estimators found at www.grainger.com/legislation [2].

Myth #5: There is no rush to accommodate the legislation because you can stock up on your current inefficient lighting and wait until you run out -- waiting will not add additional costs to your project.

Fact: Like any government incentive program, the utility rebates that are currently available will not be available indefinitely. To help businesses prepare for the change, many lighting manufacturers and suppliers will also be running promotions and other incentives to purchase energy-efficient lighting, which, similar to government incentives, may not be available once consumers and businesses adapt more widely to the legislation and efficient lighting becomes standard.

When updating the lighting in your facility, consider taking an approach that will

align with your budget and comfort level. For example, start by identifying and changing out those bulbs that do not require a retrofit.

Myth #6: When evaluating lighting within your facility and determining the best way to approach the process, you are on your own.

Fact: While some facilities may have an in-house expert who is familiar with upgrading to energy-efficient lighting, many businesses do not know where to start. There are third parties that specialize in retrofitting, and can identify the magnitude of potential savings, layout a plan for the project, and even execute the installation and apply for the appropriate utility rebates. An example of such a partner is Alliance Energy Solutions (www.alliance-energy.net [3]), which assists facilities in adapting to the lighting legislation and helps businesses maximize their energy savings.

Myth # 7: The best way to dispose of inefficient fluorescent lighting is just to toss it in the trash.

Fact: Because florescent bulbs contain mercury, they may pose an environmental hazard when disposed of improperly. The best way to dispose of inefficient lighting is through recycling, and if there are no recycling centers or drop-off locations in your local area, you can purchase pre-labeled recycling kits that allow you to mail used bulbs to recycling centers to help ensure proper disposal.

For more information, please visit www.grainger.com/legislation *[2].*

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