

New year, new light bulbs: Replace watts with lumens

If you haven't already replaced your inefficient light bulbs with energy -and money- saving options, you will.

As of Jan. 1, 40 and 60 watt bulbs will no longer be manufactured or imported into the United States due to a federal energy law requiring improved efficiency. This follows the phase-out of 100 and 75-watt incandescent bulbs that has occurred over the past two years.

"The federal law, signed six years ago, has led to more lighting innovation than we saw during the 100-plus years after Edison invented the light bulb," says Noah Horowitz of Natural Resources Defense Council's Center for Energy Efficiency

Over time, the new standards could save Americans \$13 billion on annual energy bills and as much electricity as is generated by 30 large coal-burning power plants — and the associated pollution that harms our health and contributes to climate change — every single year, he writes in his Switchboard blog.

Incandescents are not disappearing in the New Year. They're just getting more efficient.

Consumers have three major types of bulbs to choose from: new and improved incandescents that use 28 percent less energy, and CFLs (compact fluorescent lamps) and LEDs (light-emitting diodes) that provide energy savings of at least 75 percent and last a lot longer.

All of the major lighting companies, including GE, Philips and Sylvania, have been producing energy-savings bulbs. Since the new light bulbs use less power to give off the same amount of light, consumers will no longer be buying bulbs simply based on their power, expressed in watts. Instead, they will shift toward buying bulbs based on light output, expressed in lumens.

Manufacturers explain that a 13-watt CFL gives off as much light as the old 60-watt incandescent bulb by printing on the package "replaces 60W bulb" or "13 W = 60 W."

But not all CFLs and LEDs are created equally. **To ensure you're getting a good one, buy those that have the Energy Star label.** These not only save you energy but will also perform well over time. CFLs and LEDs last 10 to 25 times longer, respectively.

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