

# CFLs trigger a 'green light' for energy efficiency

by Debby Canto Davis

*The average home pollutes the environment twice as much as a car. That's because every time we flick on a light switch, wash a load of laundry or turn on the television we're using energy.*

Yet today's technologically suave homeowners want more and more gadgets. How can builders and designers give customers what they want and also help them lighten their energy load?

One way is to 'go green' by installing energy-efficient lighting to reduce energy costs and energy usage.

## Programs are in place

Resources are available to make this happen: The National Association of Home Builders has put together model green home building guidelines. The U.S. Department of Energy has released a schedule for setting new appliance efficiency standards. The U.S. Green Building Council manages the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program which is a building rating system based on current technologies. And the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency operates the Energy Star program.

The goal of each agency is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through increased product energy efficiency. And politicians are jumping on the bandwagon. Many states are adopting legislation to require upgrading the energy efficiency of products.

"We strongly believe in the Energy Star program and the need to protect our environment through the greater use and proliferation of energy-efficient products," says Ace Rosenstein, vice president of marketing and business development for Sea Gull Lighting Products of Riverside, N.J.

Sea Gull received the 2007 Energy Star Sustained Excellence Award from the EPA and DOE for its efforts in promoting environmentally friendly lighting products.

Winner of the 2007 Energy Star Partner of the Year Award for its development of energy-saving products is GE Consumer & Industrial. "It's a clear indication of our direction and what we think is most important to our customers," says Michael Petras, general manager of commercial and industrial lighting. "We want to become North America's energy-saving leader."

## Compact fluorescent bulbs can save a bundle

In 2006, 99.7 percent of screw-in compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) products sold by GE were Energy Star-qualified. The company offers 67 Energy Star-qualified lighting products. To display the coveted Energy Star logo, products must meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the EPA and DOE.



*GE's Energy Star-qualified Energy Smart CFL globe-shaped lamp can be used in chandeliers and post lamps.*

*Styled in a weathered copper finish over solid brass, these Energy Star mini-pendants from Sea Gull Lighting's Sebring collection offer an eye-catching effect with just a touch of sparkle from the clear-seeded glass.*

*GE's Energy Star-qualified Energy Smart Dimmable Spiral CFLs can be used with standard household dimmer switches.*



According to Energy Star's Web site, if every American home used one Energy Star-qualified CFL and all the rest were standard incandescent light bulbs, we could save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes for a year — that's a \$600 million energy cost savings in one year.

The lighting industry encourages more action. Experts recommend using Energy-Star-qualified fixtures and bulbs in the highest-use areas of a home: the family and living rooms, kitchen, dining room, bedrooms and outdoors. The rule of thumb is if the fixture is used at least 15 minutes at a time for several hours a day, it should be energy-efficient lighting.

Energy Star fixtures, for example, use one-third the energy of traditional lighting and they distribute light efficiently and evenly. They come in hundreds of decorative styles including portable fixtures such as table, desk and floor lamps, and hard-wired options such as at front porch, dining room, kitchen ceiling and under-cabinet, hallway ceiling and wall, and bathroom vanity fixtures. Features include dimmers, automatic daylight shut-offs and motion sensors.

Couple these energy-efficient fixtures with Energy Star-qualified CFLs and the energy cost savings escalate.

"Most fixtures today can use some version of a CFL," says Joseph A. Rey-Barreau, a professor in architecture and interior design at the University of Kentucky and consulting education director of the American Lighting Association. "There are dozens and dozens of sizes and shapes."

CFLs use about 75 percent less energy than standard bulbs and they last up to 16 times longer. That's a savings of about \$30 or more in electricity costs over each bulb's lifetime. CFLs also produce about 75 percent less heat, so they're safer to operate and can cut energy costs associated with home cooling.

But selecting the right energy-efficient lighting for a home takes a bit of work.

"It's much more complicated to go out and buy a CFL than it is to go buy a 75-  
(See *GREEN LIGHT*, page 29)



Nowadays it goes without saying — go fluorescent. You can run four fluorescent bulbs for the price of one incandescent. (Photo by Stacey Klemenc.)



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## Green light

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watt incandescent bulb," Rey-Barreau says. "We're still in a very early phase of consumer education of what all this means."

For example, he says, Energy Star fixtures can only use CFLs and there are many types of wattages and colors to choose from. Matching the right CFL to the right fixture helps ensure the duo performs properly and lasts a long time. Here are some tips:

- CFLs work best in open fixtures that allow airflow, such as table and floor lamps, wall sconces, pendants and outdoor fixtures.
- Use a reflector CFL for recessed fixtures to evenly distribute light to a specific task area.
- For fixtures connected to a dimmer or three-way switch, use special CFLs designed for these applications.
- Choose the CFL color that works best for the specific application, such as a cool color for task lighting.
- Choose the right amount of light for the specific fixture. Manufacturers



*Trendy yet timeless, the Sussex collection from Sea Gull Lighting offers all the charm of yesteryear, while complementing today's style trends. It includes an assortment of chandeliers, pendants, ceiling fans and wall, bath, hall and foyer lighting in either heirloom bronze or brushed nickel finishes.*

print relevant information on the packaging to help consumers make the correct selections.

With the variety of energy-efficient options available today, lighting industry representatives emphasize it's possible for everyone in the U.S. to live up to

Energy Star's challenge: Put energy-efficient lighting in one room of the house. The change, Energy Star claims, would keep 1 trillion pounds of greenhouse gases out of the air.

*(Debby Canto Davis is a free-lance writer living in Archdale, N.C.)* **VAB**

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