

# Shed Some Light on Energy Law

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There are no electrical outlets in our furnace room. Therefore, we have to plug our life-saving carbon monoxide detector into an adaptor screwed into the light fixture in the ceiling. Because we have to keep the light switch on to avoid the detector turning off, I have to unscrew the light bulb for the lights to go out.

No matter how many times I lick my fingers, they still get a little burned when I unscrew that hot bulb. The reason why is because incandescent bulbs waste about 90 percent of their energy producing heat instead of light. Hoping to increase energy efficiency, President Bush enacted the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) of 2007. The Act required that low-efficiency incandescent light bulbs would be gradually phased out of production.

Under the act, all screw-in light bulbs were required to use 25% less power by this year and 65% less by 2020. The government eliminated 100-watt bulbs in 2012 and 75-watt bulbs in 2013. This year, the ban on 60- and 40-watt bulbs begins. While consumers may not have noticed the abolition of higher watt bulbs, 60- and 40-watt bulbs are the two most popular bulbs on the market.

Not all incandescent bulbs are banned. Light bulbs used in appliances, marine lamps, three-way lamps and also rough service bulbs are exempt from the ban and will continue to be available for purchase.

The law is obviously designed to encourage consumers to use more energy efficient bulbs, including light-emitting diodes (LEDs), compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) and high-efficiency incandescent bulbs (halogen bulbs). Unlike the bulb in our furnace room, about 60% of the energy used by LED bulbs produces light. As a result, experts predict the transition from incandescent bulbs will save Americans billions of dollars each year on electric bills, as lighting accounts for about 15% of electrical use in homes.

While high-efficiency bulbs cost more than old-fashioned incandescent bulbs, they last as much as 10 times longer, so consumers will save money on buying bulbs and energy bills.

Not everyone is excited about the switch, however. My dad, for example, thinks that higher-efficiency bulbs aren't as bright as their incandescent predecessors. My sister doesn't like the white color of the light emitted by higher-efficiency bulbs, as she feels they make her living room look like an operating room.

So like my family, many Americans plan to stock up on old school bulbs while they're still available. While importing or manufacturing 60- or 40-watt incandescent bulbs is illegal under EISA, it's still perfectly acceptable to purchase and own these bulbs.

One of the biggest concerns over EISA, however, was the fate of Hasbro's Easy Bake Oven. Using the heat given off by a 100-watt light bulb, young bakers could bake delicious desserts. Thanks to American ingenuity, in 2011 Hasbro introduced the Easy Bake Ultimate Oven, featuring a heating element that does not use a light bulb. So our powdery, undercooked cookies are safe.

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