

Why Change Your Lighting?

The incandescent light bulb has been in existence for over 100 years. Basically, an incandescent bulb works by sending electric current through a resistive wire. This causes the electric current to slow down and produces heat. The heating of the filament in the bulb in turn produces light. This is a very inefficient means of generating light, something like 10% of the electricity used in an incandescent bulb is actually used to produce light. The remaining 90% is given off as heat.

Fluorescent lighting is much more efficient, but because it uses long tubes and special fixtures, it is reserved for certain applications – kitchens, offices, bathrooms, shop lights, etc. You would not put one on your living room!

Recently however, they have reduced the size of fluorescent lamps and changed their shapes, creating more compact bulbs that will fit in traditional light fixtures. These are called compact fluorescent lamps, or CFLs. They have a screw-in base, a built-in ballast, and come in a variety of colors and sizes.

The main advantages of a CFL are the energy savings and the reliability. CFLs typically last up to 10,000 hours versus 1000 hours for an incandescent bulb. They also use about 1/5 the energy for the same amount of light output (lumens). A 23 watt CFL is the equivalent of a 100 watt incandescent bulb.

Changing to CFLs is as easy as changing your light bulbs. Unscrew the incandescent, and screw-in the CFL!

If you change all of the bulbs in your house to CFLs, the typical household electric bill will go down between 10-20%, depending on what percent of your electric usage is due to lighting. The CFL bulbs pay for themselves in a matter of months!

CFLs can be found in most stores these days, but there are some bargains if you buy them in multi-packs. Home Depot, Lowe's, and some ACE Hardware stores have great deals on CFLs. A six pack of 14 watt CFLs (60 watt incandescent equivalents) goes for \$3.99 at Home Depot! In addition, the state of Connecticut has temporarily waived the sales tax on these bulbs.

Take advantage of the low cost of these bulbs now, and start saving dollars on your electric bill!!

But remember also that CFLs contain mercury, so it's important to recycle them properly when they do burn out. In Middletown, these must be recycled at a Household Hazardous Waste collection day, but the city is working on a way to recycle these anytime by taking them to the recycling center.