

## **A U.S. Alliance to Update the Light Bulb**

*Matthew L. Wald*

A coalition of industrialists, environmentalists and energy specialists is banding together to try to eliminate the incandescent light bulb in about 10 years.

In an agreement to be announced Wednesday, the coalition members, including Philips Lighting, the largest manufacturer; the Natural Resources Defense Council; and two efficiency organizations, are pledging to press for efficiency standards at the local, state and federal levels. The standards would phase out the ordinary screw-in bulb, technology that arose around the time of the telegraph and the steam locomotive, and replace it with compact fluorescents, light-emitting diodes, halogen devices and other technologies that may emerge.

Compact fluorescents are three times as efficient as old-fashioned bulbs, and light-emitting diodes six times as efficient. These also last much longer. But while they cost much less to run, they are more expensive to purchase, and getting home users to change the bulbs in the estimated four billion sockets in the United States would probably require eliminating the choice.

James E. Rogers, chief executive of Duke Energy and the co-chairman of one of the efficiency organizations in the coalition, the Alliance to Save Energy, said in a statement, "Encouraging our customers to use advanced compact fluorescent light bulbs and other energy-efficient lighting is fundamental to our plans to meet growing demand for electricity as economically as possible."

The agreement is a compromise among the participants. Some favored an outright ban on incandescent bulbs, like the one Australia said last month it would seek by 2009 or 2010. Philips, a unit of Royal Philips Electronics of the Netherlands, has pledged with others doing business in Europe to seek a shift to more efficient lighting there, too.

The announcement planned Wednesday in Washington will commit coalition members to seek "a market phaseout" by 2016.

General Electric, the largest American manufacturer of lighting, has recently been campaigning against the elimination of incandescent bulbs, and promising instead to bring out a new model that is twice as efficient as its current bulbs. The company is not part of the new coalition. But it has allied itself with the Natural Resources Defense Council in another group called the United States Carbon Action Program, which seeks to control emissions of greenhouse gases through energy conservation.

Noah Horowitz, a scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said his group favored a performance standard, like the ones already in place for appliances like refrigerators, that would effectively require manufacturers to give up the traditional bulb. "We've given up a sound bite, 'ban the incandescent,' as opposed to a phaseout of the incandescent and a move to more efficient lighting," Mr. Horowitz said, adding that the reason was to avoid angering consumers.

Replacing incandescent lamps could slow the growth in greenhouse-gas emissions, but not radically. About 22 percent of electricity is used for lighting, and about 42 percent of that is now generated by incandescent bulbs, according to the organizers. That means that a little over 9 percent of all electricity is used in incandescent bulbs. If that figure were cut by half, it would be equivalent to two or three years of growth in electric demand. Replacing older fluorescent lamps with newer, more efficient ones would help, too.

The participants say that a complete phaseout would save \$18 billion a year in electricity, and save the amount of power that would be produced by 30 nuclear reactors or as many as 80 coal plants. It would also eliminate substantial mercury emissions from the coal plants, they said.

The Australian government said on Feb. 20 that it would seek to ban incandescent bulbs and replace them with compact fluorescents. Shortly thereafter, the environment minister of Ontario, Laurel Broten, said her province was considering a similar step, and a California assemblyman, Lloyd Levine, introduced a bill to do the same.

"Incandescent light bulbs were first developed almost 125 years ago," Mr. Levine said, "and since that time they have undergone no major modifications."

Kathleen Rogers, president of the Earth Day Network, one of the groups in the alliance seeking to end the use of incandescent bulbs, predicted, "I think you're going to see these disparate efforts adding up to this great tidal wave." The problem, she said, was that "the incandescent spends most of its life making heat, not light."

But General Electric, which traces its origins to Edison, said that could change.

"It's shortsighted to freeze technology in favor of today's high-efficiency compact fluorescent lamps," the company said in a statement. "We'd rather keep innovating and offering traditional, commercial and industrial consumers more energy-efficient choices — not fewer choices."

Alexander A. Karsner, the assistant secretary of energy for efficiency and renewables, said that the government could theoretically force the change. "Government has a legislative hammer in the toolbox," he said. "But to be prescriptive on the next product technology is probably not a way we want to go."

Setting a performance standard would be better, he said, because that would allow the industry to comply with whatever technology it could best provide.

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