What's with the new “Light Bulb Law?”

There is a lot of confusion about the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA), or “light bulb law.” EISA includes new energy-efficiency standards for light bulbs. One myth is that EISA bans incandescent bulbs. While it is true that standard 60-, 75-, and 100-watt incandescent bulbs are being phased out over the next three years (starting with 100-watt bulbs in 2012), many manufacturers are developing more energy-efficient incandescent (halogen) bulbs to meet the new standards. A growing number of CFL and LED replacement bulbs also are available. The goal is to make light bulbs 60-70% more efficient than today’s standard incandescent bulbs by the year 2020. This is where CFLs and LEDs have a distinct advantage. They already exceed 2020 standards, using 75% less energy than today’s incandescent bulbs!
Denny’s Ace Hardware regularly runs CFL and LED promotions, partnering with Minnesota Power to provide instant rebates. The store also posts informational material and displays a glowing side-by-side demonstration of CFL and incandescent bulbs at work.

“Every year, energy-efficient lighting gets better,” Otis said. “Initially, some people didn’t like the lighting quality or look of CFLs, but now there are ‘daylight’ options with brighter, whiter light and bulbs with globes covering the twists so they look more like traditional bulbs.”

The transformation has homebuilders, business owners and institutions interested, as well as homeowners. Sam’s Club in Hermantown sells light bulbs in bulk, and no longer carries regular incandescent bulbs. “Our business model is to seek out the best products in the market, and right now that means CFLs and LEDs,” said Tim Sundstrom, club manager, Sam’s Club, Hermantown.

Sam’s Club displays its energy-efficient lighting in heavy traffic areas, such as end caps, for easy access and high visibility. Built-in discounts through Minnesota Power make ENERGY STAR®-qualified CFLs and LEDs popular products. “Rebates still drive the market, but performance keeps customers coming back,” Sundstrom said. “Once people get them in their homes and businesses, they realize the energy savings and how long they last.”

Minnesota Power has partnered with almost 100 lighting retailers in its service area over the last several years to promote energy-efficient lighting and help customers make effective energy choices.

“You may have noticed new labels on light bulb packages, similar to nutrition labeling on food. The Federal Trade Commission now requires the new labels to provide standardized information:

- Brightness (lumens)
- Estimated annual energy cost
- Life expectancy (years)
- Light appearance (cool/warm)
- Energy used (watts)
- If the bulb contains mercury*

The thing to remember when shopping for bulbs is to focus on lumens, not watts. Lumens tell you how much light a bulb will provide, watts only reveal how much power it uses. Choose bulbs with a high efficacy or high number of lumens per watt to get the most light for your dollar. Not all CFLs and LEDs are created equal. For best results, please check for the ENERGY STAR® label when buying your bulbs.

* CFL bulbs contain small amounts of mercury. Visit Minnesota Power’s online lighting resource center at www.mnpower.com/lighting or www.epa.gov/cfl for more information on cleanup and safe disposal.

Lumens + Color + Purpose + ENERGY STAR® = Value

(Brightness) (Yellow–Blue) (Outdoor, Task, Area, etc.)

EDUCATE YOUR CUSTOMERS about Minnesota Power’s conservation incentives and build your business on energy efficiency:

ENERGY STAR® Lighting Rebates

Minnesota Power offers a variety of discounts and rebates for the purchase of ENERGY STAR®-qualified light bulbs and fixtures. Learn more about incentives and technologies at www.mnpower.com/lighting.

Visit www.mnpower.com/foundmoney for more complete information on rebates and other energy-saving tools to help your customers make energy-saving investments and build your reputation as a business committed to delivering the benefits of energy efficiency.