



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 6, 2011

## California Bids Farewell to Incandescent Light Bulbs

On January 1, California became the first state in the country to require a new standard for screw-base bulbs, potentially eliminating 100-watt incandescent light bulbs. According to experts, the new rules will save residents money as well as energy.

California and Nevada are leading the way for the rest of the nation as new standards on light bulbs, passed by Congress in 2007, are set to take effect nationwide on January 1, 2012.

[Mercury News](#) writes:



As of Saturday, what used to be a 100-watt light bulb manufactured and sold in California will have to use 72 watts or less. The 72-watt replacement bulb, also called an energy-saving halogen light, will provide the same amount of light, called lumens, for lower energy cost.

Similar new standards for traditional 75-watt, 60-watt, and 40-watt incandescent bulbs will go into effect in California over the next few years, with wattages reduced to 53, 43, and 29 respectively.

While the new rule does not necessarily ban the 100-watt incandescent light bulb, it does require them to be 25 to 40 percent more efficient, a standard that pertains only to those light bulbs manufactured in 2011 or beyond.

California's Energy Commission notes that the new standards will avoid the sale of 10.5 million of the 100-watt light bulbs.

Adam Gottlieb, spokesman for the California Energy Commission, indicates, "The 72-watt light bulbs is [sic] improving Edison's original idea." Gottlieb contends that the new standard will reduce air pollution from the burning of fossil fuels in power plants. He adds, "Consumers will still have the amount of light they need for the task at hand. But they'll see lower electricity bills."

Whether the new light bulbs will provide a sufficient amount of light for life's everyday functions is not clear, however. "[Discovery Health](#)," a study published by the *British Medical Journal*, explains how engaging in activities with low light, most notably reading, can lead to eye strain:

If you read in low light, your visual muscles get mixed signals: Relax to collect the most light, but at the same time, contract to maintain the focused image. When that object is poorly lit, focusing becomes even more difficult because the contrast between the words and the page isn't great, which decreases the eye's ability to distinguish visual detail. That ability is called visual acuity. Your eyes have to work harder to separate the words from the page, which strains your eye



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muscles.

[HubPages.com](#) indicates, "If you have reduced vision for any reason, try using stronger light....Try a 200-watt light bulb."

Apparently that option is no longer available to Californians.

The energy experts in California tout the comparable costs of the new light bulbs as a selling point. The cost of the new 72-watt light bulb is comparable to that of the 100-watt incandescent light bulb.

*Mercury News* notes, "A two-bulb package of 100-watt incandescent bulbs is about \$4.32 at Lowe's, while a four-bulb package of new 72-watt halogen bulbs is \$8.66 or \$4.33 for two."

Likewise, proponents of the new standard point to the alleged inefficiencies of the incandescent light bulb. Noah Horowitz, senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council, contends, "The 125-year-old incandescent light bulb is far and away the least efficient product in our homes, because 90 percent of the electricity is wasted as heat."

The 72-watt light bulb appears to be a more favorable alternative to the incandescent light bulb than the [compact fluorescent \(CFL\) bulb](#) that is favored by the federal government.

Of the CFLs, World Net Daily writes,

The presence of small amounts of highly toxic mercury in CFLs poses problems for consumers when breakage occurs and for disposal when bulbs eventually burn out. The potential environmental hazard created by the mass introduction of billions of CFLs with few disposal sites and a public unfamiliar with the risks is great.

According to Texas Republican Congressman Joe Barton, the favorability of the alternatives is of no concern: "The American consumer should be able to make the choice. This ban is indicative of the overreach that the Obama administration, Mrs. Pelosi, and Majority Leader Reid, have put on the American people.... They want to tell the country what's best for them to do."

The new bulbs can already be found at Home Depot, a company that has trained its staff extensively on the new law, and has reconfigured its stores to include signs in the lighting aisles that explain the energy efficiency of the different light bulbs.

Likewise, Lowe's Home Improvement stores have removed all of their 100-watt incandescent light bulbs.



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