Performance Enhancement For Residential Light Fixtures

by Jason Lomberg, Technical Editor

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In a recent beer commercial, a woman asks for a low-calorie beer, and the host proceeds to spill out half the bottle, and hand

it to her. In similar fashion the EPA believes that, through the use of add-ons, one can improve the innate efficiency of legacy technologies. In reference to their new Energy Star "technical amendment [1]," the EPA's Lightning Program Manager, Alex Baker, told me [2], "With this approach, the Program currently has nearly 12,000 qualified fixtures from more than 120 manufacturing Partners…even incandescent technologies (*the latter only allowed when used with a motion sensor to minimize operating time*)" (emphasis mine). Sure, juicing up allows you to hit more home runs, but in the eyes of the law, steroids amount to an unfair advantage. Is this what Mr. Baker meant when he referred to a "competitive disadvantage" for legacy systems?

Take the "Fluorescent Light Manager" from Power-Save Energy [3]. The device

purportedly controls all Compact Fluorescent Lights (non-dimmable and dimmable) and Fluorescent Linear Tubes (T12, T8, T5, circular) with non-dimmable ballasts. In other words, the Light Manager reduces the excessive radiance of fluorescents to a more acceptable (not to mention cost-effective) level. This is no slight against Power-Save. I'm sure their device performs as advertised. But as an energy solution, this can only serve to prolong the lifecycle of an inefficient technology. There's nothing technically wrong with the Fluorescent Light Manager. But when a performance-enhancing device, such as the Light Manager, is used by bureaucrats to "juice up" outdated systems, something is very wrong.

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[1] http://www.energystar.gov/ia/partners/prod_development/revisions/downloads/fixtures/RLF_V4_2_FINAL.pdf
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