

# Giving the Gift of Efficiency

BY BRIAN SLOBODA, COOPERATIVE RESEARCH NETWORK

Holiday decorating can cause spikes in your January electric bill. One great way to keep your light displays from breaking the bank is to invest in light-emitting diodes, or LEDs.

## *LED holiday lights are:*

### **ENERGY EFFICIENT.**

They use 70 percent less energy than traditional incandescent light strings.

### **LONG-LASTING.**

They boast a lifespan up to 10 times longer than incandescent lamps.

### **SAFE.**

They stay cool to the touch, reducing the risk of fire.

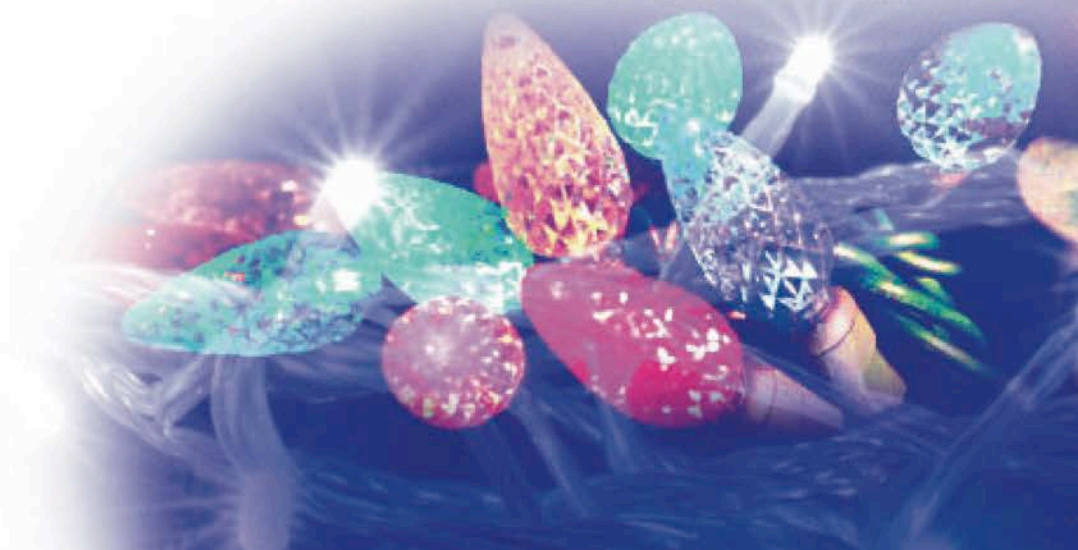
### **STURDY.**

Bulbs are made of epoxy, not glass, making them much more durable than other lights.

LED holiday lights come in a wide variety of colors, shapes, and lengths and are available at many home improvement, wholesale, drug, and grocery stores. Although LEDs might be more expensive than incandescent lights at the time of purchase, energy savings over their life make them a big money saver. And prices continue to fall down as the technology becomes less expensive. At HomeDepot.com, you can get a 50-count strand of white lights or multicolored lights for around \$12.

The brightness and color of LED lights have also come a long way over the past few years. For white lights, you can choose between cool white (a bright icy-blue white) or warm white, (a yellow tint that's the closest to a white incandescent replacement).

Make sure the lights you buy are labeled for indoor or outdoor use, depending on where you want to place them. Decorating outside with indoor lights can shorten the life of the bulbs.



For even more energy savings, use a timer to turn on holiday lights from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

When purchasing your lights, make sure the packaging bears the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label. That means an independent testing group has thoroughly checked the product for safety hazards such as fire and shock.

One more thing to keep an eye out for involves lumen output of the lights. Traditionally, lightbulbs have been based on their power

use—or how many watts they consume.

Beginning in January 2012, all lightbulbs will carry a label showing the lumens of the bulb, or how bright it is. More lumens means a brighter light; fewer lumens a dimmer light.

Careful shopping can save money on the monthly electric bill while giving your loved ones—and the neighborhood—a festive holiday display. ■



---

*Brian Sloboda is a senior program manger specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Additional content provided by E Source.*

#### LEGAL NOTICE

This work contains findings that are general in nature. Readers are reminded to perform due diligence in applying these findings to their specific needs as it is not possible for NRECA to have sufficient understanding of any specific situation to ensure applicability of the findings in all cases.

Neither the authors nor NRECA assumes liability for how readers may use, interpret, or apply the information, analysis, templates, and guidance herein or with respect to the use of, or damages resulting from the use of, any information, apparatus, method, or process contained herein. In addition, the authors and NRECA make no warranty or representation that the use of these contents does not infringe on privately held rights.

This work product constitutes the intellectual property of NRECA and its suppliers, as the case may be, and contains Confidential Information. As such, this work product must be handled in accordance with the CRN Policy Statement on Confidential Information. Copyright © 2012 by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.