

# Lighting

Lets talk lighting. All of us have light fixtures in our homes that use light bulbs. Years ago our only option for bulbs was incandescent. These were the ones with the glass globe that enclosed a filament that glowed and gives off light. These were available from 15 watt for a fridge all the way up to 200 watt for large open areas. Incandescent lights were very hot to the touch and quite costly to operate.

Next came compact fluorescent. Everyone got excited about the compact fluorescent because it was new and looked rather different. Called a mini-spiral, it is a coiled glass tube containing a mercury vapour or powder that was self ballasting which means that unlike normal fluorescent lamps, it didn't need the external ballast for it to work. You just screwed the compact fluorescent into the socket and turn it on, easy. Compact fluorescents are dangerous though, if broken the mercury gas is dispersed into the atmosphere and can be inhaled. Compact fluorescents are an energy saver compared to incandescent lamps. A 23 watt compact fluorescent has the equivalent light output as a 100 watt incandescent bulb....so they said. This means that you only pay for 23 watts instead of 100 watts.



Next came LED (Light Emitting Diode ) technology. LED bulbs are the latest thing to come to our local big box hardware stores. Any electrician will tell you that LEDs are the best choice for any lighting application. I get asked almost daily what to use for lighting, my answer LEDs. LED bulbs now come in all styles and sizes. You can find decorative LEDs for chandeliers, LEDs that look like the old incandescent shaped bulbs, Par 20, MR 16, GU10 or anything else your light fixture may require. The best thing about LEDs is that instead of 100 watts of power being consumed like in the incandescent, you now will use 16 watts of power for the same light output.



Lets clarify something. I was told by a LED manufacturer, that in Canada, there have not been guidelines imposed for the manufacturing of LED products. What this means is that not all bulbs are created equal. Over the last few years we have installed hundreds of residential pot lights complete with LED lamps. We have found that dimmer switches from different manufactures installed with our lamps responded differently. We got a call from a customer, who said there was a problem with the 12 pot lights we installed, they were strobing, not all of them, just 2. After extensive investigation, and a call to the manufacturer, we determined that the dimmer was not compatible with the lamps. Lesson learned, if your going to install LED lamps and dimmers, call the lamp manufacturer and determine which dimmers are compatible with the lamps you are installing. If you do that you may not get to see the strobing light show, but it will save you a lot of trips to the supplier and a lot of frustration.

I got a call today from a man who said he replaced the incandescent lamps in his light fixture with compact fluorescence, and the light switch started humming. Electronic switches and dimmers also have to be rated for the type of light bulb you are using. I wonder what tune it was humming?