

“Save a Watt for Wyandotte”

Changing the Way We Light our Homes

In fall 2008, Wyandotte Municipal Services (WMS), a municipal utility with a service territory of over 10,000 homes, received a grant from the Michigan Public Services Commission for a pilot project to “Save a Watt for Wyandotte” by distributing up to 100,000 CFLs to its customers. The goal of the project was to quickly saturate the community with CFLs to accomplish the following:

- Give every Wyandotte resident a chance to reduce their energy costs today by installing approximately 10 CFL bulbs per household
- Evaluate the impact of the CFL saturation on residential energy demand
- Design a CFL distribution model that can be replicated by communities across the state

WMS hoped that by providing financial incentive for a significant amount of CFL product, and making them easily available at local retailers, that they would transform the local market for energy efficient lighting and achieve substantial penetration and deployment of CFLs in the Wyandotte community.

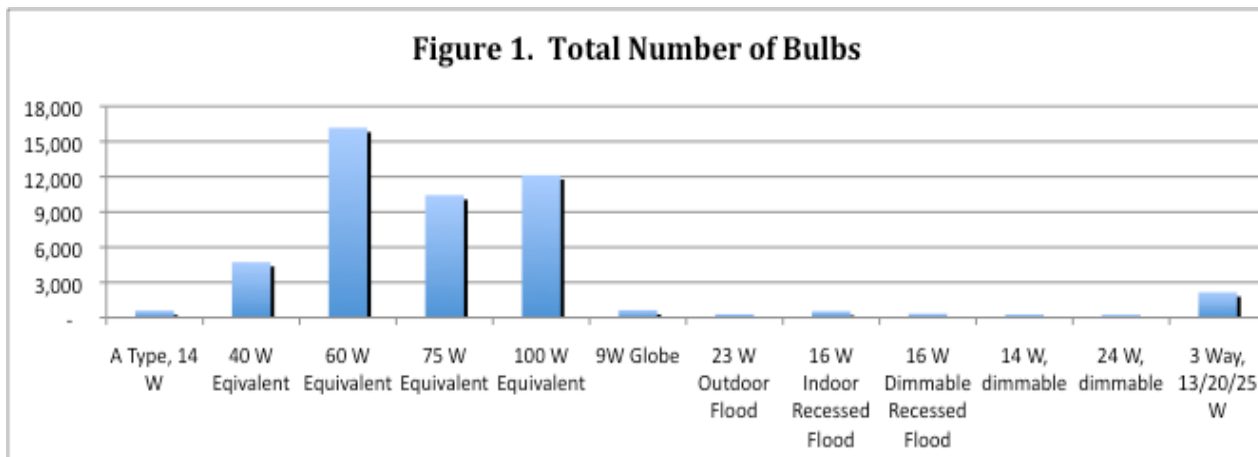
METHODOLOGY:

WMS selected EarthTronics, a Michigan-based producer of energy efficient lighting, as the program CFL vendor. WMS also partnered with two local retailers for the CFL distribution. Customers were sent coupons in their monthly bill for up to 10 CFL bulbs (depending on the desired model of the bulbs), redeemable at the two stores.

Concurrently, WMS publicized the program through its website, local cable access channel, bill inserts and newsletters, at community events, and within the stores via displays and well-trained staff. The outreach focused on the energy and cost saving benefits of switching to CFLs.

PROGRAM RESULTS:

The initial phase of the program was very successful. Over 47,000 bulbs were distributed to WMS customers, as depicted in Figure 1. As is evident from the graph, the most popular bulb styles were the 60, 75, and 100 W equivalent bulbs. Of the specialty bulbs, the 3-way bulb was the most popular. Each of these bulb styles were among the most affordable and flexible for use.



Engaging retail stores as the partners in distribution worked extremely well for the following reasons:

- Encourages customers to go to retail stores for their bulbs
- Retailers were vital in helping to educate customers on CFL benefits and use
- WMS did not have to manage any inventory
- Retailers saw an uptick in the number of customers in their stores, and sales of other products

Customers were also surveyed to get their thoughts on the program, and evaluate the extent to which they made switch to CFLs. Thirty-three respondents completed the survey.

- 97% of respondents would like to see another CFL program
- 94% were satisfied with this program
- 1 respondent did not receive coupons; and 1 respondent did not use the coupons that were sent due to concerns about mercury and quality of bulbs
- 84% of the 31 respondents who used the coupons were satisfied with the selection of bulbs
- 79% of respondents received help choosing bulbs in the store (18% replied that in-store help was “not applicable”)

In general, respondents appreciated the vast array of bulbs available through the CFL program. However, some respondents could not purchase desired bulbs due to inventory availability at the retail locations.

As a primary goal of the Save a Watt program was to saturate the community with CFLs and encourage everyone to immediately switch out their incandescent bulbs, the participants were also asked about their use of the CFLs once they brought them home from the stores.

Number of Bulbs Replaced

Bulbs Replaced	% of Respondents
0	6.10%*
1-2	3.00%
3-5	27.30%
6-8	27.30%
9-12	36.40%

* Represents the 2 respondents who did not redeem coupons.

Reasons for Not Replacing Bulbs:

If you have NOT put all of your CFLs into sockets, why?	
Rationale	% of Respondents
All of my lights currently have CFLs	22%
Waiting to replace when old bulbs burned out	74%
It's too hard to replace the remaining lights	9%
Selection of bulbs available	24%
Lamp incompatibility	9%
Can't use CFLs in Some Applications	9%
Concerns about Mercury	3%

CONCLUSIONS:

Overall, Phase I of the CFL program was a great success. Over 47,000 bulbs were distributed, which represents an average of approximately 4 bulbs/household in WMS' customer base. Customers were largely enthusiastic about the program and over 60% of those sampled actually replaced at least 6 bulbs with CFLs. A primary goal of the program was to get substantial “swapping out” of incandescent bulbs without waiting for them to burn out, and our calculations estimate that over 70% of the bulbs were installed!

Partnering with local retailers was a particularly strong element of the program. The retailers served as key educators to consumers in the process, and realized at least some additional business by participating in the program.

While results were good, it is clear that myths and misunderstandings about CFLs continue to persist, particularly fear of the mercury content (which in truth, is less than the amount in the tip of a sharp pencil). For true market transformation to CFLs to occur, WMS (and other communities) must continue to educate and inform their customers about the insignificant risks posed CFL bulbs, and the overall lower life cycle cost. This program demonstrates that with significant outreach, education, and provision of financial incentives, many people are ready and willing to switch to CFL bulbs.