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Stores in the European Union will no longer be allowed to buy or import most incandescent frosted glass bulbs starting Tuesday.

## Europe's Ban on Old-Style Bulbs Begins

By JAMES KANTER

BRUSSELS — Restrictions on the sale of incandescent bulbs begin going into effect across most of Europe on Tuesday in the continent's latest effort to get people to save energy and combat global warming. But even advocates concede the change is proving problematic.

Under the European Union rules, shops will no longer be allowed to buy or import most incandescent frosted glass bulbs starting Tuesday. Retailers can continue selling off their stock until they run out.

While some Europeans are eagerly jumping on the bandwagon, others are panicking and have been stockpiling the old-style bulbs for aesthetic or practical reasons. Others are resigned to the switch, if grudgingly.

"Why are we switching? Because we have to," said Ralph Wennig, a 40-year-old photographer shopping on Monday at BHV, a Paris department store.

The new compact fluorescent lamps are billed as more economical in the long run because they use up to 80 percent less energy and do not burn out as quickly.

"But the downside is that the light isn't as nice," Mr. Wennig said, "and they are more expensive individually."

One bulb can cost €10, or \$14 [2023 Amazon price \$1.44] whereas traditional incandescent bulbs cost about 70 cents each. But E.U. officials argued that the energy savings would cut average household electricity bills by up to €50 a year, amounting to about €5 billion annually. That would help buoy the economy if consumers spent their savings, they said.

At a briefing Monday in Brussels, however, they also were defending themselves against charges that they were depriving children of traditional fairground lights, and dealing with more serious questions about health hazards from the mercury in the new lamps.

Such arguments have already started to reverberate in the United States, where incandescent bulbs are due to be phased out starting in 2012.

Until then, the E.U. is providing the biggest staging ground for both the conversion as well as a debate over trade-offs created by environmental legislation. The issues include the loss of long-standing manufacturing industries, consumer choice and possible exacerbation of other environmental hazards.

The ban is one of a series of measures to support the E.U. goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2020. Everything from televisions to washing machines to tiny motors are being made more energy-efficient.

But the light bulb ban has proved singular in the way it has stirred fierce debate. The ubiquity of lighting and the way it can alter the aesthetics of an interior, even the experience of reading a book, makes it somehow more personal.

E.U. countries are not the first to ban incandescent light bulbs, but they are in the vanguard.

Australia has already introduced a ban and Cuba has entirely shifted to compact fluorescent bulbs, according to Andras Toth, an expert with the European Commission, the E.U. executive agency.

Consumer advocates in Europe have cautiously welcomed the measures but they also have pointed to drawbacks for consumers — especially those who have a special sensitivity to certain kinds of light or need old-style bulbs for health reasons.

“The blanket ban could spell misery for thousands of epilepsy and anxiety sufferers who are adversely affected by energy-saving bulbs,” said Martin Callanan, a European Parliament member.

He also warned that the new bulbs would not work in all types of fixtures nor with dimmer switches, and that they would give off a harsh light.

E.U. officials sought to reassure consumers that they still would have plenty of choice, and that the changes would be gradual. The clear 60-watt bulb, one of the most commonly used, would remain available until at least September 2011, and clear 40-watt bulbs until 2012.

National governments will be responsible for enforcing the rules.

However, the European Commission acknowledged that compact fluorescent lamps had to be handled with extra caution. If one breaks, people

are advised to air out rooms and avoid using vacuum cleaners when cleaning up the mess to prevent exposure to mercury and other electronic parts in the bulbs, officials said. Instead, householders should remove the debris with a wet cloth while avoiding contact with skin. Used bulbs should be put in special collection receptacles, officials said.

Stephen Russell, the secretary general of ANEC, a group representing consumer interests in the development of product standards, said the commission had set the limit for mercury too high.

E.U. officials said that they would find ways to push the industry to reduce the amount of mercury to levels around 2 milligrams per bulb from the current level of 5 milligrams per bulb.

The effects of the ban are likely to be felt first at the checkout counter, where supplies of old-style bulbs soon could dry up entirely.

In Germany, consumers have been taking the precaution of stockpiling old-style light bulbs. Sales of incandescent bulbs have increased by 34 percent during the first half of this year, according to GfK, a consumer research organization.

“Some delay may happen before you get all possibilities at reasonable prices,” said André Brisaer, another European Commission official, who is helping to lead the phase-out.

Other consumers have complained that compact fluorescent bulbs do not last as long as incandescent bulbs when turned off and on like a standard bulb and that they take too long to illuminate fully. In those cases, commission officials have recommended that consumers use halogen bulbs, which brighten more quickly and are up to 45 percent more energy-efficient than incandescent bulbs.

But WWF, an environmental group, said standard halogen bulbs should also have been removed from the market.

“Getting rid of incandescents is a no-brainer, but halogens are nearly as wasteful,” said Mariangiola Fabbri, a senior energy policy officer for WWF.

As for fairgrounds, E.U. officials insisted that adequate replacements were available that would retain their soft-white traditional ambiance.

*Judy Dempsey in Berlin and Lisa Pham and Alice Pfeiffer in Paris contributed reporting.*

## German Businessman Imports 'Heatballs' to Dodge EU Light Bulb Ban (1)

ESSEN, Germany — A businessman has devised a way around a European Union ban on incandescent light bulbs of more than 60 watts by producing and pitching them as mini-heaters called "heatballs." The European Union began phasing out (2) the sale of incandescent light bulbs in favor of more energy efficient bulbs in 2009. Sales of traditional light bulbs of 100 watts or greater were the first to go in September 2009, and sales of bulbs of 75 watts or greater followed this past September. Sixty-watt incandescent bulbs will be available for sale until September 2011. According to Reuters (3):

"Siegfried Rotthaeuser and his brother-in-law have come up with a legal way of importing and distributing 75 and 100 watt light bulbs -- by producing them in China, importing them as 'small heating devices' and selling them as 'heatballs' ...

"Rotthaeuser studied EU legislation and realized that because the inefficient old bulbs produce more warmth than light -- he calculated heat makes up 95 percent of their output, and light just 5 percent - they could be sold legally as heaters."



To underscore the idea, the Heatball website (4) says, "The intended use of Heatballs is heating." The site also notes that 0.30 euros of the Heatball purchase price of 1.69 euros is being donated to a project for rainforest protection. That comes to about 42 cents of a purchase price equivalent to \$2.37. In the U.S., the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 calls for a transition to more energy efficient lighting starting January 1, 2012, when 100-watt incandescent bulbs will no longer be sold. Seventy-five-watt traditional bulbs will be the next go in 2013. Sales of 40- and 60-watt bulbs are to end in 2014. Recent studies by GE Lighting (5) and Osram Sylvania (6) showed that although more Americans are purchasing energy efficient light bulbs, most are clueless about the regulations mandating the switch.

1. <http://www.greenbiz.com/news/2010/10/19/german-businessman-imports-heatballs-dodge-eu-lightbulb-ban>

2. <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/09/113>

3. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE69E33320101015>

4. <http://heatball.de/verwendung.php>

5. <http://www.greenbiz.com/news/2010/01/28/majority-americans-still-dark-about-federal-phaseout-traditional-bulbs/>

6. <http://www.greenbiz.com/news/2009/12/16/more-americans-give-green-light-energy-saving-bulbs-are-dim-about-urgency-switch/>