

Congress working on light bulb phaseout

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The House and Senate are working on legislation that, over the next seven years, would phase out the conventional light bulb. The move is being made to save energy and reduce man-made emissions believed linked to climate change.

General Electric Co., Philips Electronics NV of the Netherlands and other manufacturers have been meeting with conservation and environmental groups and say they are close to agreement on the general terms of a phaseout. Bipartisan coalitions in Congress probably will add these terms to a broad energy bill expected to be voted on next month.

While manufacturers voiced some concerns about producing enough replacement bulbs to meet the new deadlines, they emphasized they want prompt federal legislation that would prevent states from setting their own standards and creating a patchwork of differing requirements. Nevada already set its own standard and California is considering one.

Paul Waide, Policy Analyst, International Energy Agency based in Paris, told the Senate Energy Committee yesterday the European Union, Canada and Australia are planning similar phaseouts of conventional incandescent bulbs, and China is beginning to consider one.

"It is not inconceivable that over the next 10 to 15 years maybe all incandescent lights will be removed from the global market," he said. If that happened, he added, the resulting reduction in carbon-dioxide emissions might equal almost three-fourths of the reductions industrial nations have promised under the Kyoto Protocol to curb global warming.

The U.S., which has 4 billion electric lights using such bulbs, represents about a third of the world market. Installing more efficient incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) would save consumers about \$6 billion a year in energy costs, said Jeffrey Harris, Vice President, Alliance to Save Energy, a Washington D.C. nonprofit group.

Under the timetable proposed in both House and Senate versions, incandescent bulbs would begin to disappear from U.S. markets beginning in 2012, with 100-watt bulbs going first. One year later, 75-watt bulbs would be phased out and then the more popular 60- and 40-watt bulbs by 2014.

The bulbs would be replaced by CFLs and more efficient incandescent lamps, which can cut energy use from 30 to 75 percent. By 2020, both bills call for lighting standards that only can be met by CFLs or other technologies that can match their efficiency.

Editor's note: Since 2005, more than 3 million CFLs have been sold through the APS discount CFL program, saving more than \$90 million in energy costs and reducing carbon emissions by 675,000 tons.