

The Simple Talk of Converting Over to LED

There is a lot of misinformation out there. How many watts of LED do I need to replace my Metal Halide fixtures? How many lumens? How many foot candles? Are retrofit kits good? Do I need to replace my fixtures?

All good questions. And let us add, the task doesn't get easier because there are masterful marketers that are presenting a lot of confusing information (or should we say misinformation?). So let's give some straight talk. And we hope this guides you into making the best decision for your company, business or building.

Watts vs. Lumens?

So do you buy a LED based on watts or lumens? Well, here's our advice. Always buy on lumens, never buy on watts. First, figure out how many lumens you need to accomplish the job, and then find the LED product that produces that amount of lumens the most efficiently (without paying a large premium for performance). So let's use a real world example, let's say you want to replace an outdoor parking lot light that has a 400 watt metal halide bulb. From experience, we believe that a LED fixture that produces between 12,000 and 16,000 lumens works well. Our 105W LED Retrofit Kit produces 15,000+ lumens. Our competitors product produces slightly over 13,000 lumens and consumes 135 watts. So based on the initial definition, both satisfy the lumen requirement. But wait! One product consumes 105 watts and the other consumes 135 watts. What gives?? Well, welcome to the world of efficacy, or in layman's terms, lighting efficiency. So the first lesson here is not all LED products are as efficient as other products. If you just bought the 135 Watt retrofit kit you would be spending 30 more watts to produce 2000 less lumens. In fact, to compare apples to apples, you would have to dial down the 105 Watt

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unit to 89 watts to get it to produce the exact same number of lumens as the less efficient product. That makes it a 46 watt difference.

So - the lesson here is to figure out the lumens you need and then find the product that produces those lumens the most efficiently.

Lumens vs. Foot candles?

Well, now we know that lumens are the amount of light one particular bulb or fixture makes, LED or otherwise. So what are foot candles? Foot candles are the measurement of light in an area produced by all the lights in that area. So how much do you need? Well there are guidelines and suggestions that are published - so once you know what you need, then the process is simple.

Using software, a light engineer can model the right fixture, in the appropriate spacing, to achieve the foot candles you are trying to obtain. So walking through the process, knowing how many foot candles you need will dictate the lumens each light needs to produce so collectively they produce the required amount of light you need.

LED Retrofit Kits vs. New LED Fixtures?

Good question, and not a simple answer. First, we have heard the suppliers who only sell new fixtures say bad things about retrofit kits. And those suppliers who sell only retrofit kits say bad things about new fixtures. It's pure marketing confusion. So what's the real answer? Well it depends, on your situation. First, there is no reason to believe a retrofit kit isn't as good or won't last as long as a new fixture. That's pure nonsense. If your fixtures are in good shape, or you have a large investment in your fixtures (car dealerships for example), then retrofitting makes sense. If your fixtures are old, rusting and leaking, new fixtures make sense. Some utilities rebate new fixtures and not retrofits, some only rebate retrofits. So making the decision has nothing to do with performance or reliability concerns. It has everything to do with what's the best solution for you.

DLC Premium or DLC Standard or No DLC?

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Recently, DesignLights Consortium (DLC) introduced 2 levels of qualification, the Standard Listing and the Premium Listing. Utility companies typically (but not always) give rebates to DLC Listed products. So why the 2 standards? Well it really is a division based on efficiency. As we discovered earlier in the retrofit example, there were 2 models, the 105W 15,000 lumens retrofit kit and the 135W 13,000 lumen retrofit kit. Turns out both are DLC Listed, but the 105W unit is DLC Premium Listed and the the 135W unit is DLC Standard listed. The idea behind the two levels was to [offer higher rebates for DLC Premium Listed products](#). So if you do the math, at time of purchase, there may be a higher rebate available plus years of years of higher savings.

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