

Seeing the light

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Rising energy costs illuminate ways manufacturers can reduce consumption, save money on bills

By **DAN SHINGLER** July 28, 2008

Like everyone else, Northeast Ohio manufacturers are desperately looking for — and finding — ways to save energy and reduce what they pay for electricity, natural gas and other forms of energy.

They also are finding suppliers to help them achieve those savings. Sometimes, vendors are finding savings their manufacturing customers weren't even looking for.

Take for example, Ruben Borunda, manager of plant operations for the Earle M. Jorgensen Co, a steel service center in Twinsburg. Recently, about 400 new energy-efficient HIF fixtures were installed above Mr. Borunda's head — and that was after he got the bright idea that would save his company more than \$4,000 a month on its electric bill.

Mr. Borunda readily admits the idea was not his own, but came from Bob Taussig, a salesman for Lighting Services Inc, also in Twinsburg.

"I just knew I wanted more light," Mr. Borunda said.

Mr. Borunda's workers told him the plant floor was getting dark and suggested it would be safer to have more light, especially in the corridors where tow motors pick up and maneuver tons of steel. The 50-year-old plant's high intensity metal halide lights had dimmed with time, as is normal for that type of light. Mr. Borunda could have simply replaced the bulbs, but was open to a suggestion that converting to new, high-intensity fluorescent fixtures would not only provide more light, but would also save the company enough money to pay for themselves in about two years.

"That was their sales pitch — it worked, and it's still working," Mr. Borunda said.

Like fluorescent bulbs designed for home use, industrial fluorescent fixtures put out more light than metal halide and other competing fixtures, but use far less electricity and generate less heat in the process. The bulbs in Jorgensen's new fixtures use only 215 watts of electricity, compared with 455 watts for the bulbs they replaced and put out more light, said Kurt Allerman, president of Lighting Services.

Jorgensen spent \$106,000 to install the new fluorescent HIF fixtures. Now, Mr. Borunda said, the company is not only on schedule to recoup the cost of its investment, but has better lighting.

Lighting Services, which employs 25 people and has revenues of about \$10 million a year, has done well finding facilities like Jorgensen's and convincing them to switch over to high-intensity fluorescents, Mr. Allerman said.

So far, the company has installed new fluorescents at specialty coatings manufacturer RPM International, the University of Akron, Youngstown State University, Coca Cola, Pepsi and Best Buy distribution centers where it has installed more than 1,500 fixtures, above more than a million square feet of warehouse space, Allerman said.

"Energy savings is really what's driving this," he said. "Everyone is trying to reduce operating costs and lighting is the low-hanging fruit," Mr. Allerman said.



After Ruben Borunda learned that having energy-efficient lighting would save Earle M. Jorgensen Co, a steel services firm, more than \$4,000 a month, the plant operations manager converted to energy-efficient HIF fixtures.

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