



Save Energy and Support Your Local Hardware Store

Yes, you can do both – save energy and support your local hardware store at the same time! I was just reading today’s paper and noticed the big, full page splash for Hills Flat Lumber. It addressed the long successful legacy of their family-owned business, as well as their ongoing commitment to the community and the environment. I’ve had an account with them for over 25 years because their products and services are the best. It also helps that they’ve treated me – and all the other contractors I know – like family (we fondly refer to Hills Flat as “Hills Brothers” because the Pardini brothers are all involved with the company). This is the sort of business locals should be giving their business to, not the “big box stores” down the hill!

So there I was, walking down an isle at “Hills Bros” this morning, trying to think of a topic for this week’s article and the answer was right in front of my face! Hanging there in front of me - a dozen or so energy saver Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) with built-in reflectors on sale for \$3.99! Turns out I had bought several at our electrical wholesaler’s warehouse for \$4.99 just yesterday (yep – I said wholesaler!). That’s when it hit me – here’s a win-win-win scenario! I just got my subject for this week’s article, I can mention one of Nevada County’s finest and oldest companies, and I can cover some of the products they carry that’ll save folks energy (and money).

Anyway, I was looking for those particular (reflector base) CFLs because I’ve used them in my “can lights” for years. If you’re not familiar with the term “can light”, think of a coffee-can sized light fixture recessed into your ceiling. Some new custom homes I’ve seen have dozens of them, with a full complement of dozens of incandescent lamps, known for putting out more heat than light. Flip a switch controlling a bank of these lights and go watch your PG&E meter attempt to spin right out of its glass case! Replacing the incandescent lamps with the reflector-base CFLs will reduce your electricity use by about 75%. As an added bonus, one CFL will last about as long as 8-10 incandescent bulbs. If your can lights are in a vaulted ceiling, the longer-lasting CFL will save you significant ladder time too. Just measure the diameter and inside depth of your can light before going to the store to make sure your new CFL’s will fit properly.

Hills Bros. also had a wide variety of other energy-saving CFL’s, including the ball-shaped “vanity lights” that sit above the mirror in your bathroom (another “PG&E meter spinner”) and four packs of table-lamp sized CFLs for \$1.99. They’ve got a wide variety of caulks, foams and sealants for plugging air leaks in your home, and they have an especially helpful (and surprisingly available) support staff to help you find the right product for the job. They even stock pipe insulation with a ¾” wall thickness, something I haven’t seen at most other hardware stores (others carry the non-recommendable ½” wall thickness made from a lower quality insulation material).

I could drone on and on but, since this is a holiday weekend and you should be getting back to your family, let me end on this note..... Happy Holidays Nevada County!

Ray Darby is President of Sustainable Energy Group Inc., a Grass Valley company offering energy efficiency and solar services for residential and commercial buildings, from comparing the alternatives through installation and servicing of energy systems of all types. You can reach him at 530-273-4422, via email RayDarby@SustainableEnergyGroup.com, or visit their web site at www.SustainableEnergyGroup.com.

