



Halogen Lamps to Be Phased out As New EU Ecodesign Rules Enter into Force

The EU ban applies to non-directional mains-voltage halogen lamps. A non-directional lamp is defined in contrast to a directional lamp, which is, in turn, defined as “a lamp having at least 80% light output within a solid angle of π sr (corresponding to a cone with angle of 120°).” The ban initially applies only to new products: remaining stocks may be lawfully sold. New stocks of lamps which do not conform to the new ecodesign requirements will be forbidden from being placed on the EU market. Market surveillance including a verification procedure is foreseen, as well as a conformity assessment procedure in line with the Ecodesign Directive.

A number of exemptions apply to certain types of halogen lamps that are known as “special purpose lamps”. These exempted products are typically manufactured in shapes such as capsules and tubes, in contrast with the traditional pear-shaped incandescent lightbulb. Exempted products include directional halogen lamps (such as spotlights), low-voltage halogen lamps (such as oven lights) and halogen lamps with specific applications, such as those used in desk lamps or floodlights (including R7s, G9 and G4 lamps). These exemptions are based on the fact that there is a lack of affordable alternatives on the market.

Exemptions are also available for halogen lamps whose primary purpose is not lighting, including infrared lamps, traffic signal lights, devices used in chemical and biological products (such as ultraviolet-emitting lamps), camera flashlights and video projector lamps.

All such exempted lamps must conform to strict ecolabelling requirements. Packaging must indicate the intended purpose of the “special purpose lamp”, that the lamp is not suitable for household illumination, and the technical parameters which justify the use of a specific design of lamp for its intended purpose.

Hong Kong traders will appreciate that this ban takes place in the broader context of global and regional trends away from incandescent lamps in favour of LED technology and compact fluorescent alternatives. The European Commission first proposed incremental measures targeted at highly inefficient “D”-category halogen lamps in 2009, including a ban by 2016. This was adopted as Regulation 244/2009 and set out a six-stage programme to reduce the use of halogen lamps through increasingly stringent ecodesign rules on non-directional household lamps. On 17 April 2015, EU Member States agreed to amend the Regulation by extending the tolerated period of time for the final stage until 2018, in order to allow more time for the necessary technological innovations and market adaptation.

It should be noted that the ban forms part of the EU’s Ecodesign Working Plans, which focus on energy efficiency and a transition to cleaner forms of energy. The Third Ecodesign Working Plan (2016-2019) includes a review of lighting and other household products in light of technological innovations and a policy favouring resource efficiency. This review will not, however, reopen the cases of lamps which have already been phased out.

While welcomed by a majority of EU Member States and consumer organisations, the new ban will, however, have an impact on the industry. The Commission has claimed that a maximum of 6,800 jobs will be lost, but that these redundancies are inevitable given the efficiencies offered by LED lights in the long term.

The deferral of the date of entry into force (to September 2018) of the ban was also intended to allow time for industry to adjust to the technological and ecodesign requirements of the new legislation.

The EU institutions have also agreed to set a 32.5% energy efficiency target for 2030, although legislation has yet to be enacted. The promotion of LED lighting is a key part of this policy, as LED bulbs have a much longer (5 to 10 times) lifespan than their halogen equivalents, and use approximately one-tenth of the energy of traditional alternatives.

Some stakeholders have, however, criticised the higher initial cost of LED lighting, despite the cheaper running costs over the lifetime of an individual LED unit. Campaigners in the UK, for example, have called for the ban to be overturned after Brexit. This is an unlikely outcome, as the UK was one of the first European countries to provide for the phasing out of incandescent lamps prior to action being taken at EU level.

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