



## **CSA Q&A**

### **Is it true that fluorescent T12 lamps are being phased out by the federal government?**

T12-HO lamps for electric signs are **not** currently being phased out, nor are there any plans to phase them out in the foreseeable future. High-output sign lamps are considered a specialty type of lamp under Department of Energy (DOE) regulations. The DOE's recent phase-outs of fluorescent lamps focuses principally on general purpose lamps, such as those widely used for interior lighting. High-output lamps for signs, however, are designated as Cold Temperature lamps (the "CT" designation appears on the lamp), and these lamps currently are exempt under the DOE regulations.

This phase-out applies strictly to what the DOE refers to as "general service lamps." This *does not* apply to T12 lamps used in certain specialty applications, including electric signs. Sign lamps are designated as Cold Temperature lamps, and they are exempt. This exemption was necessary mainly because the major manufacturers of fluorescent lamps are not producing smaller-diameter HO lamps (e.g. T10 or T8) in all of the various sizes (lengths) necessary for sign applications (e.g. F84, F72, F64, F60, F48, F42, F36, F24 and F18). Furthermore, because sign lamps represent such a small portion of the overall lamp market, these manufacturers have no plans now or in the future to produce smaller-diameter HO sign lamps.

For the time being, however, end users of fluorescent/plastic signs do not need to retrofit their signs, because T12-HO sign lamps and corresponding ballasts will still be available. In general, electric signs strictly use High Output T12 lamps. The small percentage of signs that are illuminated by other T12 lamps (e.g. Slimline or bipin lamps) will need to substitute other light sources (e.g. T8s). But this will affect only a very small segment of the sign industry. If you have concerns, contact the manufacturer directly to verify availability.

The EPAC Act that was passed in 2005 mandated that T12 magnetic ballasts were to be no longer manufactured or sold in the US starting in 2010, and that regular T12 lamps are to be phased out by the end of 2012.

In 2013 PG&E will no longer provide rebates for T12 to T8 retrofits and, provided the EPAC Act is enforced, regular T12s should no longer be available for sale in the US.

*Source:* Jeff Aran (CSA), Roy Flahive (Pacific Sign), Bill Dundas (ISA). Thank you, Sally Baggett (Arrow Sign) for your query. Send your questions to [jeff@calsign.org](mailto:jeff@calsign.org)