



The law does not ban the use or manufacture of all incandescent bulbs, nor does it mandate the use of compact fluorescent ones. It simply requires that companies make some of their incandescent bulbs work a bit better, meeting a series of rolling deadlines between 2012 and 2014.

Furthermore, all sorts of exemptions are written into the law, which means that all sorts of bulbs are getting a free pass and can keep their energy-guzzling ways indefinitely, including “specialty bulbs” like the Edison bulbs favored by [Manhattan decorator] Mr. [Darren] Henault, as well as three-way bulbs, silver-bottomed bulbs, chandelier bulbs, refrigerator bulbs, plant lights and many, many others.

Nonetheless, as the deadline for the first phase of the legislation looms, light bulb confusion — even profound light bulb anxiety — is roiling the minds of many. The other day, Ken Henderlong, a sales associate at Oriental Lamp Shade Company on Lexington Avenue, said that his customers “say they want to stockpile incandescent bulbs, but they are not sure when to start. No one knows when the rules go into effect or what the rules are.”

Probably this is because articles about light bulb legislation are incredibly boring, and articles about the end of the light bulb as we know it are less so. Certainly they stick in the mind longer.

For years, Glenn Beck, among other conservative pundits and personalities, has proclaimed the death of the incandescent light bulb as a casualty of the “nanny state” (never mind that the light bulb legislation is a Bush-era act), and he has been exhorting his listeners to hoard 100-watt light bulbs (along with gold and canned food). This year, conservative politicians took a leaf from his playbook, introducing bills like the Light Bulb Freedom of Choice Act, courtesy of Michele Bachmann, the Minnesota congresswoman, that would repeal the 2007 legislation.