**W.Va. Division of Energy**Contact: Courtney Sisk, (304) 957-9341
Courtney.S.Sisk@wv.gov

For immediate release
Nov. 19, 2012

**Save money and energy with LED lights**

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Whether draped over a Christmas tree, or outlining the house, lights are a sign of holiday cheer.

They can also mean a jump in your electric bills -- that is, unless they're LED.

LED stands for light-emitting diode. This type of holiday lights use 90 percent less electricity than incandescent holiday lights and can last up to 50,000 hours outside. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, LED holiday lights can last for 20 to 30 years.

Standard incandescent bulbs typically last about 2,000 hours. And because LEDs operate at lower temperatures, they reduce fire risk indoors and out.

Light-emitting diode lights are unlike typical bulbs because there's no filament, which incandescent bulbs have, and none of the gas found in fluorescent bulbs. LEDs move electrons through a semiconductor, which produces light. Since LEDs do not have a filament, they are almost indestructible, and not damaged under circumstances when a regular incandescent bulb would be broken. Because they are solid, LED bulbs hold up well to jarring and bumping.

When shopping for LED holiday lights look for the Energy Star label, which guarantees that the lights are independently tested to meet electrical requirements, have passed a 1,000-hour continuous test, and carry a three-year warranty. Those labeled "for outdoor use" are subjected to testing in outdoor conditions.

The Energy Star LED holiday lights use a tenth of the electricity of conventional bulbs. Although the initial investment in LED holiday lighting can be more expensive than standard incandescent string lighting, LED lights will pay for themselves in a few seasons in terms of durability and lower power costs.

An Environmental Protection Agency report estimated that the U.S. uses about 2.22 million kilowatt hours of electricity each year to illuminate miniature holiday lights. That's enough electricity to run more than 1,300 homes for a year.

Based on these figures, the EPA report concluded that a 20 percent market shift to LED Christmas lights would reduce annual electricity consumption in the U.S. by 400,000 kilowatt hours.

For more energy efficiency tips, visit the West Virginia Division of Energy at <http://www.wvcommerce.org/info/aboutcommerce/energy/default.aspx>.

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