



Combining Con Ed funding with local law compliance: Understand the “rules of the road” - by George Crawford

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With Local Law 88 combined with Local Law 134 now requiring all buildings in New York City above 25,000 s/f to upgrade their lighting to LED, it's time to start focusing on this requirement while Con Ed programs are still available to fund a portion of the up-front costs.

While LL 88 has been on the books for over seven years, most buildings have not upgraded to meet the new lighting requirements. With the recent add on of LL 134, the number of buildings required to comply has now more than doubled to include all buildings above 25,000 s/f in size (both commercial and residential). Residential units in multifamily buildings are excluded from these compliance requirements.

Besides these two local laws, there are additional lighting code requirements that are also now in effect. Most of these additional code requirements revolve around energy conservation, such as bi-level lighting in fire stairs (to further reduce electric consumption). To add to the mix, there are buildings with fire safety code deficiencies including buildings with older battery back-up lighting for stairs and other points of egress. Older batteries are not able to provide the required 90 minutes of emergency lighting in the event of a power outage and therefore do not meet code. There are also buildings that do not have the required emergency egress lighting. Upgrading offers an excellent opportunity to meet both the new requirements as well as correct existing deficiencies.

While a LED retrofit comes with a price tag, the good news is that a LED retrofit – to achieve compliance with LL 88 and LL 136 – will more than pay for itself because of the lower levels of electrical consumption. The amount of these savings combined with Con Ed funding (open to Con Ed customers) will almost always allow the scope of a LED retro-fit project to be expanded to not only achieve compliance with LL88 and LL 134, but to include other lighting upgrades as well as address existing deficiencies.

Before starting on any LED retrofit project, it is important to understand the Con Ed funding “rules of the road.” To qualify for funding, under no circumstances should any LED retrofit project start before receiving Con Ed’s “Authorization to Proceed”. Con Ed’s “Authorization to Proceed” will follow the submission and approval by Con Ed of the project Funding Application, which will be followed by a

Con Ed on-site inspection. This inspection is the first of two inspections: 1) “Before” the project starts, and 2) “After” the project is completed.

Con Ed funding applications must be completed and submitted on behalf of each building requesting Con Ed funding by a Con Ed market partner, who will interface with Con Ed and manage the project in accordance with Con Ed procedures. One of the “under the radar” advantages of the Con Ed funding program, besides the actual funding, is the project oversight that Con Ed provides. Con Ed oversight includes using only Con Ed approved high quality LED products as well as installation quality control for multifamily buildings, by requiring installations be performed by Con Ed trained and approved electrical contractors. Commercial buildings may select their own electrical contractors, but their installation work is subject to Con Ed inspection and approval.

In terms of the LED retrofit itself, you need to focus on quality, not on the discount products available on the internet. A LED retrofit should be seen as a long term investment that will not only save on energy costs, but be virtually maintenance free as well. If you select the high quality Con Ed approved products and focus on those with long manufacturer’s warranties, you will have a “maintenance free” installation as opposed to what could be a maintenance nightmare.

Here are some examples of recently available quality LED products with long warranties (think maintenance free) that we would recommend exploring. Most every LED retrofit will include stairs and other emergency points of egress. These areas are usually occupied infrequently, but must be lit 24/7, including battery back-up emergency lighting to meet code. The strategy here is to meet code, but to minimize electric consumption. The Con Ed approved product that we recommend is the TerraLUX SL Series Stairwell Fixture. This installation will save 80% of the electric consumed when compared to a standard florescent lighting installation.

The TerraLUX Stairwell battery back-up fixture is specifically designed for infrequently occupied spaces. It has an occupancy sensor as well as ambient light detection (for fire stairs with windows). At full power (space occupied) it consumes 13 watts and at reduced power 7 watts (space unoccupied). Importantly, it comes with a 10-year warranty, including all parts as well as the battery.

Another Con Ed approved product that we would recommend for building service areas is the universal lighting linear retrofit kit. This product will retrofit single or double 4’ or 8’ linear fluorescent lighting. In terms of savings, if this product were used to replace two 4’ T 12s – consuming a total of 80 watts – this retrofit would only consume 24 watts (or 12 watts per tube). This product carries a 7-year warranty with a 140,000 hour L 70 rating. (Translation – this product has been tested and retains 70% of its original lumen output for over 15 years).

Finally, it is important to note that the list of Con Ed approved LED products is constantly being updated. Newer LED products are approved and added, while older, formerly approved products, are removed. To get your project on the right track, reach out to a Con Ed partner who can help navigate the process.

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