

## Yet Another Benefit Of Energy Efficient Lighting

Written by Lady Logician

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If it was not [so serious](#) (and costly) it would be funny.

Cities around the country that have installed energy-efficient traffic lights are discovering a hazardous downside: The bulbs don't burn hot enough to melt snow and can become crusted over in a storm — a problem blamed for dozens of accidents and at least one death.

"I've never had to put up with this in the past," said Duane Kassens, a driver from West Bend who got into a fender-bender recently because he couldn't see the lights. "The police officer told me the new lights weren't melting the snow. How is that safe?"

This is why this story is not funny.

Illinois authorities said that during a storm in April, 34-year-old Lisa Richter could see she had a green light and began making a left turn. A driver coming from the opposite direction did not realize the stoplight was obscured by snow and plowed into Richter's vehicle, killing her.

"Would the accident have occurred if the lights had been clear? I would be willing to bet not," Oswego police Detective Rob Sherwood said.

And this is why this is so costly...

Many communities have switched to LED bulbs in their traffic lights because they use 90 percent less energy than the old incandescent variety, last far longer and save money. Their great advantage is also their drawback: They do not waste energy by producing heat.

Authorities in several states are testing possible solutions, including installing weather shields, adding heating elements like those used in airport runway lights, or coating the lights with water-repellent substances.

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Short of some kind of technological fix, "as far as I'm aware, all that can be done is to have crews clean off the snow by hand," said Green Bay, Wis., police Lt. Jim Runge. "It's a bit labor-intensive."

In St. Paul, Minn., for example, city crews use air compressors to blow snow and ice off blocked lights.

So we install LED lights because they "save" money and we end up spending that money to clean them off after storms. Of course the one thing that wasn't discussed is the eventual lawsuit against the town because they should have done more to make sure the lights were not obstructed. Right?