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Ballasts? We don't need no stinking ballasts...!

Well, yes we do and what's more they may be harder to come by. Across the lighting industry we are starting to see longer and longer lead times for electronic ballasts for T8, T5, and T5HO with projections of ballast shortages not too far around the corner.

Lighting manufacturers such as Hubbell and Lithonia are informing their respective rep agencies of these possible shortages. In a letter to their Distributor Partners Hubbell said "*Electronic ballast shortages across a variety of ballast types have now reached crisis point for the entire industry.*" "*Currently, the largest suppliers (Advance, ULT, Osram and GE) are only able to ship minute quantities of Program Rapid Start T8 (PRS) ballasts.*" Lithonia issued a similar letter stating, "*... we issued an advisory that our ballast vendors have been challenged in meeting demands for electronic ballasts due to a global shortage of electronic components from Asian sources.*" In a post to Mike Holt's website, an excerpt of a message sent by the Northeast Electrical Distributors Reports to MECA (Massachusetts Electrical Contractors Association) was published. According to the post, "*Please be advised that there is a nationwide shortage of Electronic Ballasts due to a world-wide electronic component shortage including capacitors and integrated circuits. Up until now this shortage has affected mostly standard T5 output ballasts. However it has quickly spread to High Output T5 and T8 ballasts as well. Regardless of ballast factor or starting features (programmed rapid start, instant start, etc) these bal-*

lasts are now all experiencing the same shortage. We have been told that it will spread further into HID and compact fluorescent ballasts as well as LED drivers and lighting control products."

The reasons being given for these shortages have been very generic. Most manufactures will only state that they are due to shortages of materials from overseas manufacturers. One of the most popular explanations is that due to the sudden explosion of L.E.D.'s and subsequent flood of "L.E.D. Manufacturers" most of the common components for ballasts and L.E.D. drivers, namely capacitors and integrated circuits, have been channeled to the L.E.D. market. The manufacturers of these common components did not compensate for the overwhelming demand of L.E.D.'s so that they would be able to adequately supply both markets. Consequently the ballast market is suffering.

There is little that we in the design community can do about component shortages, unless of course you have a way to grow silicon chips and/or make capacitors in your workshop at home. I know I don't. However there are some steps that we can take to help our projects.

1. Where possible try to specify "generic" ballasts if at all possible. While not ideal this will give the lighting manufactures the best possibility of getting ballasts for their products.

2. If you have to specify a specific ballast use instant start. Although instant start ballasts are not the best for lamp life they are the most basic and therefore the most



available.

3. When all else fails, honesty is your best policy. If you have to specify specialty ballasts, i.e. Step dim, program start, or full range dimming, let your client and contractors know that these are going to be extremely long lead time items. The earlier you can get a fixture approved and ordered the better the chances of the lead times not affecting the project.

As with all new technology like fire, the wheel, or the latest Droid based cell phone, there will be growing pains. The lighting and manufacturing sectors will catch up with demand, so no taking to the streets with pitch forks and torches looking to lynch the Monster (a.k.a. L.E.D. Fixtures). Everything will be just fine.

- John M. Sundy, LC.
Vice President
Pittsburgh Section

First things first – why lighting?

I have engineering in me, paired with a fun & creative side. I was always good at math and science in my high school years, plus had a passion for architecture. I started in the Architectural Engineering program at Penn State, where there were several areas of concentration: construction management, structural, mechanical, and lighting/electrical. During one of our career fairs, a lighting design firm named Schuler Shook gave a presentation. I was awed the entire time and this is when I was made my decision to concentrate in lighting in my degree. I went on to graduate with a BAE, MAE, and minor in architecture.

What led you after graduation?

I was recruited at a career fair by Smith Group, an architectural firm based in Detroit, MI. I really liked the type of projects they worked on (large scale, high profile), so I became one in the group of five lighting designers at the firm. This experience was invaluable because I had a lot of responsibility, was forced to learn quickly, plus I got to work directly with architects starting at the very inception of the project, therefore integrating and evolving the lighting throughout the entire project stages.

What was your favorite or most notable project you worked on at SmithGroup?

The National Intrepid Center of Excellence is a medical facility in Bethesda, MD dedicated to troops that return from the war with traumatic brain injury (TBI). This facility presented a unique set of challenges due to a majority of the patient population suffering from photophobia (fear of lighting). Research and studies were conducted to provide the most comfort-

spotlight:

ABBEY BERESIK, LC, LEED AP

A hometown girl returns to the City of Champions to do what she does best: Lighting Design



able lighting system for the TBI patients. The lighting design focuses on a primarily indirect approach that provides soft, diffuse lighting. I continue to do research and work on this project via the Richard Kelly Grant Foundation. Another project was at the Michigan State University, Owen Hall. This was a renovation of a 1970's building, and the challenge was to make it a fun and attractive dining and activity hall for the young generation. We won three awards for this project, more notably the SCUP award. This is actually an architectural award, but we'd like to think lighting had a huge part in the reason for this award because it was so closely integrated thought the design process, and is a key element in the architectural design and function.

What brings you back to Pittsburgh? I see a great opportunity in Pittsburgh for lighting. I am from Sarver, PA (north of city), so I decided in May this year I was ready to

start my own business here, and also be closer to family. Although Detroit is a cool city, Pittsburgh is a city that seems to give back more

to the community. Pittsburgh has a lot of exciting activity going on, plus a strong presence in the cultural and art & theatre realm.

Any future goals? I am starting my MBA this fall at Duquesne, and hope to graduate in 2011. I have several goals for my company. My main goal is to consult to architectural firms, landscape architects, MEP, etc. in the Pittsburgh area. I want to encourage collaboration at the early stages of a project and help the designers to enhance their architectural concept and architecture through lighting. I also would like to encourage the use of natural daylighting even before the use of artificial lighting is brought up, and use artificial light only where necessary. I don't like to examine and design based solely on nighttime settings, because this is not when most spaces are occupied. Education is another goal of mine to bring to my client base, be it an architectural firm, landscape architects, MEP, etc. I've recently started a blog to reach out and educated anyone interested. I also have a calendar of daily lighting tips for my clients in the works! And check out the new "Dear Abbey" section on my website!

What do you like to do for fun? Lighting is my entire life! Just kidding! I love to cook, travel, and I spend a lot of time at the gym, especially spinning class!

KNOW SOMEONE WORTH A spotlight?? LET US KNOW!