

Case Study: Miser's Mercantile, Carbondale

By Bob Ward/CLEER



Miser's Mercantile Saving 20 percent with Lighting Upgrades

People don't generally like being told what to do, but sometimes it works out okay. So it was with an energy-efficient lighting upgrade at Miser's Mercantile in Carbondale.

Landlord Dale Eubank learned last year that the U.S. government is "phasing out" the fluorescent light bulbs in the venerable second-hand store, and that he would no longer be able to purchase replacement bulbs. So in early 2012—after receiving energy coaching services from Erica Sparhawk at CLEER—he decided to install new, more efficient lights. And now that the work is done, both landlord and tenant are happier.

"Immediately everybody said it looks clearer," said Paula "Sam" Hunter, owner of Miser's for the last 27 years. "I don't think it's necessarily brighter, but it's clearer. And



Paula "Sam" Hunter greets customers at the counter in Miser's Mercantile. Photos by Bob Ward

Lessons Learned

- New T8s avoid the "flickering fluorescent headache factor"
- Better lighting can help sales
- Employees are more comfortable
- \$700 savings in just eight months

there's no flickering fluorescent headache factor."

Beginning in 2009, the U.S. Department of Energy began a gradual phase-out of the outdated and inefficient T12 magnetic-ballast lights and fixtures. The National Lighting Bureau estimated that up to 500 million T12s—the familiar, flickering, four-foot tubes—still exist in homes, businesses and institutional buildings around the country. To help con-

sumers make the transition, the government and utility companies across the nation are providing money for rebates to offset the installation costs of upgrading to more efficient lighting systems.

The Upgrades

- Replaced old fluorescent lamps
- Replaced old fluorescent lamps electronic T8 lamps
- \$700 savings in just eight months!



In the case of Miser's Mercantile, Eubank paid about \$7,500 to install new T8 electronic ballast fixtures and lights, but rebates covered 80 percent of his cost. Eubank received \$1,475 from Xcel Energy and \$4,524 from Garfield Clean Energy, a county-wide efficiency program that helps Garfield County residents and businesses save energy. In the end, Eubank's out-of-pocket cost amounted to \$1,501.

Located in a historic brick building on Carbondale's Main Street, Miser's Mercantile has long contributed to the town's funky character. Bargains can be found on shirts, pants, coats, shoes, books, DVDs and much more. Need a brass candlestick, an old-fashioned coat hook or a ceramic pelican? Browse the basement at Miser's.

Every piece of used merchandise that comes in the door at Miser's must be inspected before going on the shelves, so quality lighting is especially important to Hunter and her



Left: A shopper in the Carbondale store.
Right: Maggie Atkinson works the counter at Miser's Mercantile

employees. Carter Electric of Carbondale installed the new lights at Miser's in January 2012, and people noticed right away.

"I like them a lot better," said employee Maggie Atkinson.

These kinds of results are becoming familiar to the energy coaches at CLEER, who have helped dozens of businesses replace aging T12s with more efficient systems.

"We're finding that the T8s give a much better light," said CLEER's Erica Sparhawk. "It's really great for retail to bring more attention to merchandise on display and makes a better shopping experience for the consumer."

In addition to the better visibility in the store, the new T8 bulbs last much longer than the T12s, so businesses spend less money buying new bulbs and less time on bulb replacement.

And the savings on Miser's monthly utility bills are unexpectedly good. CLEER's Sparhawk esti-

imated that the business would save around \$600 per year, but Miser's Mercantile has already saved more than \$700 in just eight months just from the new lighting.

"It's pretty clear from going over these reports, it's a significant difference," said Miser's bookkeeper Jody Post.

Clearly, energy efficiency helps businesses save energy and money, and the current rebates make it a win-win for building owners, no matter who pays the utility bills. Who ever thought a government mandate would make so much sense?

Garfield Clean Energy/CLEER

520 S. Third St., Ste. 29

Carbondale CO 81623

970-704-9200

info@cleanenergyeconomy.net

www.cleanenergyeconomy.net

www.garfieldcleanenergy.org