

Seeing the light

Retrofit saves money, energy at local facility

By Kevin Smith Staff Writer

INDUSTRY — A growing number of Southern California companies are working to “green” their operations.

That’s all well and good. But when a business can also save big money in the process ... well, that’s a powerful incentive. And that’s exactly what Industry-based cosmetics manufacturer Markwins International Corp. is doing.

Markwins just received Orion Energy Systems’ Environmental Stewardship Award. Orion designs, manufactures and deploys energy-efficient lighting systems, and Markwins recently replaced 449 high-intensity discharge light fixtures in its 310,000-square-foot Industry facility with Orion’s compact modular, high-intensity fluorescent lights.

“Our whole warehouse management team was excited about this,” said Caroline Chiu, who is in charge of facilities and safety for Markwins. “We have logistics, another section that makes merchandising display units for retail stores, and a repackaging division.”

As a result of the lighting change, Markwins is expected to cut its light-related electricity costs by 68 percent — from \$36,192 a year to \$11,440 annually.

The retrofit cost the company \$90,500, but Chiu said it was a good investment that has improved working conditions at the plant.

“Our lighting is now very bright,” she said. “It’s brighter than the higher-voltage lights we were using before, and the radius of light illumination for each light is unexpectedly higher than what I expected. We started this on two aisles as a trial run, but now the whole warehouse has been converted to this lighting.”

Chris Westberg, a business development manager with Orion, said his company’s lighting systems include wireless controls that can incorporate motion sensors and other features that further reduce operational costs.



Mike Mullen Correspondent

Warehouse worker Grisel Quintero works under new lighting at the Markwins International Corp. warehouse in Industry. The company recently installed new energy-efficient lights that will reduce lighting costs by 68 percent.

“We can equip the lights with sensors so if there is enough ambient light (from skylights, doors or windows) during a certain part of the day, some lights can automatically dim or turn off,” he said. “That way you can use those particular lights only when necessary.”

The retrofit also brings significant environmental benefits, as Markwins drastically reduces the amount of harmful greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere.

As a result of the decreased energy consumption at Markwins, the company is helping decrease carbon dioxide emissions by 1,950 tons during the life cycle of Orion’s high-efficiency fixtures.

During that same period, the

company will reduce more than eight tons of sulfur dioxide and three tons of nitrogen oxides, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The average time for a return on investment with Orion’s lighting is 22 months, but Chiu figures her company will recoup its investment in 12 to 13 months.

And more energy-saving changes are in the works.

“Our next project will be solar energy,” Chiu said. “We’re planning to put solar panels on the roof. And our plant in China just told me they are reserving land for employees over there to grow their own vegetables. So our company seems to be going in this environmental direction.”

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