

SERVING UP SAVINGS

Upgrade To Exterior LED Luminaires Yields Big Improvements To Sonic Restaurants

Exterior lighting has three primary functions - safety, security and ambiance. With sustainability and design now complementing each other, LED luminaires for outdoor general lighting provide a win for everyone.

Sonic Restaurants

Sonic restaurants date back to the 1950s, with customers parking in individual stalls and being served through their car windows by employees on roller skates, who sometimes perform tricks in the parking lot. Without indoor seating, customers can opt for regular drive-through service or outdoor patio dining. Sonic Corporation has more than 3,500 drive-ins coast to coast, of which 80 percent are franchised.

Managing energy as a controllable expense gives Sonic a competitive advantage, improves the bottom line and helps the company be a responsible corporate citizen.

D.L. Rogers Corporation North Richland Hills, Texas

D.L. Rogers Group, founded in 1967, operates 222 drive-ins generating \$300 million in annual sales. The company is one of the largest Sonic franchisee organizations and ranked Number 30 on Multi-Unit Franchisees 2014 Mega 99 Rankings™ with locations in Texas, the Midwest, and the Southern East Coast.

As a forward-thinking company, D.L. Rogers installed poles and metal halide area light fixtures over 20 years ago, something unique to this restaurant chain. Customers provided positive feedback, stating that they felt the exterior lights made the restaurants seem cleaner and they felt safer. These responses, as well as increasing the locations' visibility from the street, encouraged the company to continue installing exterior area lighting.

As lighting technology improved over the years, D.L. Rogers did comparison testing between metal halide and LED. The LED luminaires won hands down with light uniformity, energy savings and, in particular, with the reduction in maintenance expenses. The metal halide fixtures required changing burned out bulbs that only lasted one to two years -- compared with up to 10 years with LEDs, an expensive and time consuming ordeal that required the rental of a bucket truck.

They also did an evaluation between LED and induction fixtures. While the energy savings was somewhat comparable, the LED fixtures provided far better illumination.



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In their ongoing effort to improve parking lot lighting performance and security, and reduce energy costs, this franchisee recently installed LED luminaires at seven new locations and retrofit one existing Sonic Restaurant.

The retrofit at the Mexia, Texas, location includes (15) 240W Optec LED area luminaires, which replaced 400W metal halide fixtures in the parking lot. The impetus for this upgrade was to improve security through a better illuminated facility.

The seven new Sonic Restaurants include (111) 240W Optec LED pole fixtures and (26) 60W wall packs. These were a one-for-one replacement and an upgrade from 1000W metal halide pole fixtures, and 150W and 175W metal halide wall packs.

“The high-quality LED light makes everything appear brighter and safer -- and that translates into a better customer experience,” said Darrell L. Rogers, chairman D.L. Rogers Corporation.

Utility rebates of 10 to 15 percent for each light added to the energy savings. Rogers estimates that the new Optec LED luminaires should provide payback in 2.5 years and the financial savings just add-up after that. These Sonic locations anticipate more than a decade of virtually maintenance-free lighting operation.

The Optec LED luminaires that were chosen over traditional metal halide fixtures provide dramatically improved uniformity, eliminating dark spots between fixtures.

“It just didn’t make sense to build new restaurants with the latest technology and building materials but install outdated lighting fixtures,” said Rogers. “The Optec luminaires provide very consistent and uniform illumination without having any light spilling to adjacent properties,” Rogers continued.

The parking lot and restaurant perimeter are all brilliantly illuminated, providing a welcoming and safe environment for patrons and employees.