Flashlight Shootout Update
By
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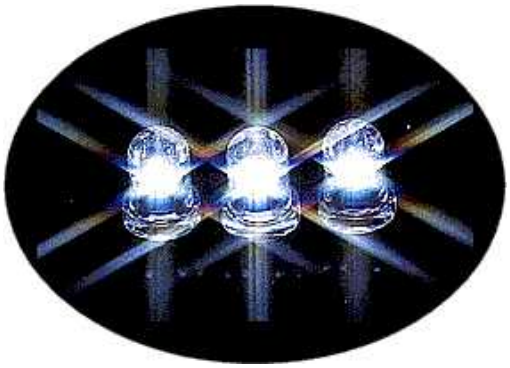
Last summer we did our flashlight shootout and were disappointed with the LED flashlights that we tried. Granted some of those lights were from Wal-Mart and Ebay but the performance of those lights wasn't even close to what a home inspector would need. Recently I have found products from Maglite and TerraLux that are worth considering. Both companies are taking advantage of the huge installed base of Maglite's and making LED modules that replace the existing bulbs.



Flashlight LED replacement bulbs are solid state "Light Emitting Diodes" that replace the old filament bulb in flashlights. The LED is ideal because it draws less current, is energy efficient, saves on batteries, more rugged, produces whiter light, very reliable, and in most flashlight applications never needs to be replaced. Older LED technology did not produce much light such manufacturers would cluster multiple LEDs to create a brighter light. Today's LEDs are extremely bright by comparison.

Rob Rich from MEI Research (meiresearch.com) was kind enough send us a 3 cell

MagLite with the 3 watt Mag-LED upgrade module. The Mag-LED modules are drop-in replacement serve as Maglite's entry into the LED market. They are available in 2, 3 or 4 cell (C or D) configurations. The conversion was a simple as replacing the bulb. Initially the biggest difference that you notice is the color of the light. Normal lights produce a yellowish hue, while the LED produces a distinct white-blue light. To test this light I parked my Ultra-Stinger and used the Mag-LED for my inspections. It does take a little getting used to the difference in the color of the light. The reach and focus were not is the same league as the Ultra-Stinger but still acceptable. One of the nice features is battery life. I have use this light daily for over a month and their was no difference in the quality of the light output.

TerraLUX is another supplier of high-end LED upgrades. They are from Boulder, Co. (my old neighborhood) uses the leading edge LED components to produce superior performing products. They sent us upgrade products for a 3 cell Maglite as well as a Mini-Maglite.

The MaxStar5 is a 5 watt Luxeon LED bulb replacement for the 3 cell MagLite.

Installation was as easy as MagLite LED. The MaxStar5 produces approximately 100-135 Lumens. You can focus the beam but not as tightly as the standard bulb. The output was slightly brighter than the MagLite LED.

For Mini Maglite owners the TerraLUX TLE-5 1watt LED Replacement is a must have. This bulb replacement produces 50 Lumens and is a disk of with a circuit board and a side-emitting Luxeon Star LED perched on top. Underneath are two pins for installation in the MiniMag bulb socket. This converted my MiniMag into a light comparable to a Streamlight Luxeon Jr. As with the other LED replacement products it doublesl battery runtime to 7-9 hours.

I was impressed with these products and given the benefits of the LED, the days of the incandescent bulb are numbered. LEDs use less energy, are shock resistant and have much longer bulb life. The 3 cell MagLite with MaxStar5 will be staying in my truck as my backup light as it still is not in the same class as my UltraStinger. For the beginning budget conscious inspector this MagLite with the LED is a good choice as it can purchased from MEI Research's website for around $30.00. The MiniMag LED upgrade from TerraLux is another great product. The MinMag light is a good product with bright light and TerraLux upgrade just makes it better.

Sources:
MEI Research / www.Action-lights.com 1-800-819-8245

TerraLux www.terralux.biz/ 866-498-1564