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Global Energy Outlook

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The Global Energy Awards are Ten Years Old

Neil Fleming, Chief Advisor, Platts

2008 marks the tenth birthday of the Platts Global Energy Awards — ten years in which the Awards have grown in stature, evolved in quality, and come to be recognized by the energy industry at large as the hallmarks of excellence, the prizes everyone wants to win.



Sustainable Technology Innovation of the Year

Orion Energy Systems, Inc

This new award attracted a host of entries — from across the globe, and from large corporations down to individuals striving to solve the sustainability issues of the future in home-built laboratories.

In the end, however, the judges chose to give the prize to an extremely hard-nosed, clearly effective technological solution to an everyday problem: lighting efficiency.

Orion Energy Systems' technology platform for lighting is not some cure-all science-fiction advance in sustainability. Instead, it uniquely combines multiple elements from the world of energy efficiency and renewables technology to deliver a solution that can cut power consumption for lighting by between 50% and a staggering 80%.

The US expends fully 22% of all its electricity consumption on lighting, mostly in commercial and industrial enterprises, where as recently as 2003 there were still close to half a million buildings using so-called High-Intensity Discharge lighting. HID is the generic term for traditional light bulbs, using mercury discharge, metal halide or sodium technology.

Orion's approach to managing lighting involves combining non-HID lighting systems, such as high-intensity fluorescent light, with web-based wireless lighting control systems and a patented solar light-pipe, called the Apollo® Light Pipe. Installed at customers such as Coca Cola, General Electric and Toyota, the approach has been so effective that Orion has entered the emissions trading market selling emissions reduction based on verified carbon reductions from power-savings.

Orion's systems are commercially viable — another point in their favor, in the judges view — and hence not dependent on state subsidies or other prop-up funding for "sustainable" technologies. The systems treat natural light delivered via the light-pipe (which features a patented dome-shaped light collector) as a primary lighting source, intelligently adjusting electrical lighting as required to complement it. Orion's measurements have shown its systems can keep electrical lighting system in an "off" state for up to ten hours a day in some zones of the US.

The Apollo® Light Pipe is the recipient of the first and only heavy commercial grading for solar pipes in the market, and was awarded a patent in January 2008. ■



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