

Utility Fights Street Light War... and Wins!

Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU), Gainesville, FL, with more than 30,000 street lights on their system, are fighting a massive force determined to put those lights out. The battle recently turned in their favor through the use of a green technology that they discovered had been developed for the power utility industry.

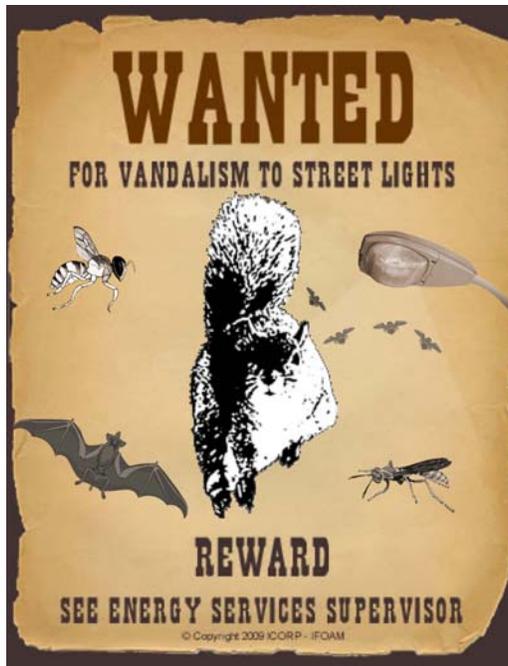
Solon Bellot, Energy Services Supervisor for GRU, and his crews are on the front lines of this conflict. They face an enemy that seems determined to put out their (street) lights. The problem is so bad that Mr. Bellot has hung a large wanted poster of one of the primary predators on his wall - the squirrel.

Expensive to replace

Streets lights can cost hundreds of dollars to replace, especially considering the cost of the fixture, equipment and manpower. According to Mr. Bellot, while a light should last five to six years before needing maintenance, quite often that lifecycle is significantly shortened due to wildlife intrusion. Any cracks or crevices at any point from the ground to the light head can provide entry points for a wide range of animals and insects including lizards, snakes, bats, flying squirrels, spiders, fire ants, wasps, bees, ... and the list goes on. Not only will the intrusion cause reliability issues it can also pose risks to the crews that work on these lights as well.

According to Kevin Walker, one of the line technicians charged with maintaining these lights, the wildlife they encounter can potentially "bite, stab or stick you". He continued "We've been having a problem with bats getting up in the lights and squirrels and even a snake or two. It's not fun when you drop the lid down (light head) and here they come! There's nowhere to run but around in that little bucket"! And of course he is talking about a bucket hanging ten, twenty or thirty feet off the ground.

Making these fixtures survive the wildlife onslaught was the subject of GRU's two year field evaluation of a different concept than anything they had ever tried. Thanks to the work of research scientists and naturalists, a non-toxic solution, trade named Sniff'n'Stop[®], has proven effective in keeping unwanted critters off of and out of electrical and communications equipment.



The Technology

The initial breakthrough to find a non-lethal solution came with the discovery of a common odor that the majority of wildlife find offensive. With wildlife's primary sense being their sense of smell, this odorant had to be designed to immediately get their attention. It also had to retain its aroma for extended periods of time throughout the wide range of environmental conditions.

To solve that problem, a patented process was developed that traps the fragrance inside a vinylized-epoxy plastic. Once the epoxy is cured, an environmentally friendly, rigid coating is formed that sticks to almost any surface while maintaining its fragrance



Sniff'n'Stop Time-Released Odorant Sponge installed inside the tubular mounting arm keeps unwanted critters and insects out of street light head. Sniff'n'Stop Animal Chewing Deterrent is manufactured by ICORP-IFOAM Specialty Products Corp. of Sanford, FL.

for years at levels that most animals can detect yet humans cannot. Best of all it doesn't hurt wildlife or the environment but does protect the infrastructure.

After his extensive search of possible answers, Solon contacted Phil Landers, ICORP's President, looking for a simple way to apply this odorant technology to his street light problems. Mr. Landers proposed coating a two inch sponge cube with a layer of semi-rigid "Sniff'n'Stop" epoxy. Crews would then be able to insert the sponge into the end of the arm where the light head attaches.

The sponge takes only seconds to install. Die cuts in the sponge allow it to be fitted around the wires. The odorant on the sponge serves as a barrier to critters coming up from within the hollow arm. The odorant trapped in the light head chases away other animals and insects that GRU was encountering.

So, how's it working?

Kevin Walker recently visited one of the problem locations where several months ago he had placed an odorant cube. He stated, "I placed the Sniff'n'Stop sponge in a street light that I'd replaced late last year. Squirrel damage has been prevalent in that area. He continued, "Where I expected to find squirrel damage, there wasn't even a bug in there. You could eat off the inside of the globe that we put in there because it was so clean. The stuff really works!"

"We have been evaluating Sniff'n'Stop now for two years. It's working so well that we haven't had to return to any lights treated with it" stated Mr. Bellot. The product is much less expensive than replacing lights and repairing other damage caused by the critters. He continued, "We feel like this product is going to provide a cost effective solution to wildlife problems in these lights based on what we have seen so far."

For GRU it appears as if the street light war may be coming to a successful end. Saving money and increasing reliability without doing harm to the environment.

In today's economic environment, green technology solutions are satisfying, especially when you can save money at the same time.



ICORP-IFOAM Specialty Products Corporation

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