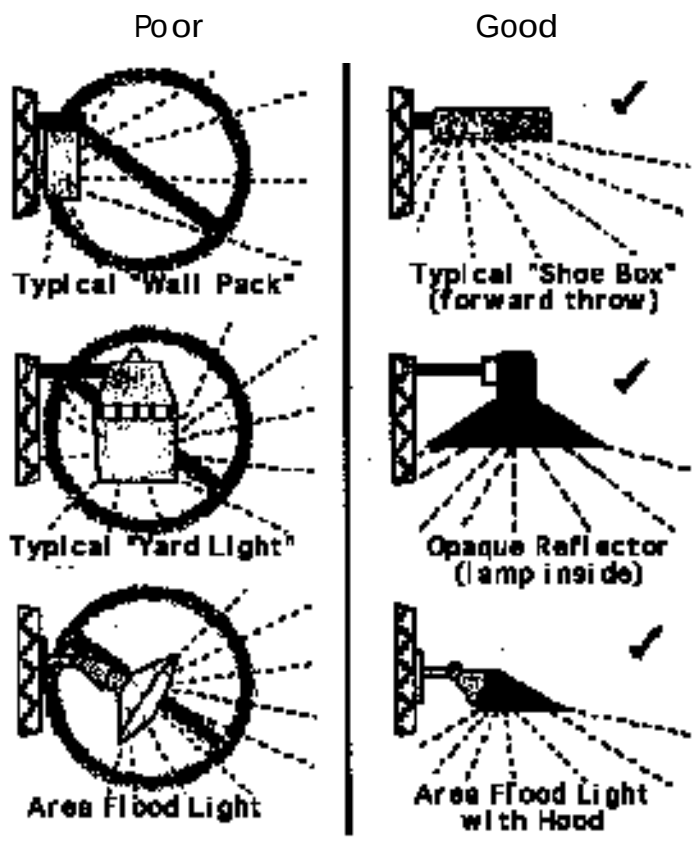
How Can We Protect the Night Sky?

You have probably moved to Custer County because of the beautiful environment–including the dark skies! The citizens here would like to preserve this environment. To that end DARK SKIES (a local volunteer organization) would like to inform you of the various issues concerning outdoor lighting to be considered when building or adding onto your home or place of business.

Examples of Some Common Lighting Fixtures



Good lighting does its intended job well and with minimum adverse impact to the environment. One way to accomplish good lighting is to use "fully shielded" lights, *where no light is emitted above the horizontal*. Shielding lights controls which areas are illuminated and prevents unnecessary light escaping upwards. But some modern lighting systems illuminate areas to a level 100 times as bright as the full moon! Too bright an area on the ground can cause *GLARE* where people or objects in the shadows become invisible.

Careful positioning of light fixtures will also maximize the effectiveness of the illumination. Fixtures should be positioned to give adequate *uniformity* of the illuminated area. A few bright fixtures (or ones that are too low to the ground) can often create bright "hot spots" that make the areas in between seem dark. Even well shielded fixtures placed on tall poles on a property boundary can cast a lot of light onto neighboring properties. This "light trespass" greatly reduces and invades privacy and is difficult to resolve after the installation is complete.

In order to reduce both operating costs and save energy, use high efficiency lights such as high pressure sodium (HPS) or metal halide. Both of these cast a more yellowish light and are easier on the human eyes. Placing lights on timers so they are functioning only when necessary is also a helpful alternative to the electric eye type fixtures which are on continuously from dark to dawn, or use motion detectors on the security lights.

More on the back

What Can We Do?

If you need more information on the types of outdoor lighting that will best meet your own individual needs, DARK SKIES has worked with three Westcliffe area businesses to help you.

Hope Wenke	Sharon Conner	Sarah Woods
Valley Ace Hardware	Lighting Solutions	Raven Woods
1 Enterprize Drive	The Corner Mercantile	59000 Hwy. 69
783-9054	3rd & Main	783-9608
	783-3766	

Bulb Type	Lumens per watt
Incandescent	20
Mercury vapor	54
Metal halide	80
High-pressure sodium	125
Low-pressure sodium	183

LUMENS = the amount of light

WATTS = the amount of electricity

Mercury Vapor:
175 watt = mean lumens 7140 = annual cost $67.24

High Pressure Sodium:
100 watt = mean lumens 8550 = annual cost $42.64

Good lighting means that we save energy and money, and we avoid hassles. A quality lighting job makes a "good neighbor"... and we all have a safer and more secure nighttime environment. Always remember that lighting should benefit people. Controlled, effective, efficient lighting at a home or business will enhance the beauty, while providing visibility, safety, and security. Then we ALL can continue to look up and see the Milky Way!!

Dark Skies

For more information, please contact:
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