

# From Campfire to Control Panel— The Evolution of Lighting Systems



## Inside this issue:

- Focus on Energy-Efficient Lighting
- Chasing Zero Net Energy Buildings
- Standardizing Automated Demand Response
- MITA Leads Drive for Equipment Maintenance
- Annual Lighting Products Showcase



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Identifying macro changes and their impacts on the electroindustry is both a challenge and an opportunity for NEMA manufacturers. Once changes are identified, we must then adapt our products and approaches to accommodate and anticipate when they will occur. This is a daunting responsibility. There are three such interrelated changes that are occurring today that affect our membership—energy efficiency, urban migration, and the aging U.S. population.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Energy announced that it is expanding the Better Buildings Challenge to include the multi-family residential sector. The Better Buildings Challenge was created to incentivize building operators “to reduce the energy used across their building portfolios by 20 percent or more over ten years and transparently showcase the solutions they use and the results they achieve to help spur billions in new investment and savings in commercial buildings, multifamily housing, and industrial plants.”

The significance of expanding the Better Buildings Challenge can be tied to a recent column in IEC’s *e-tech* magazine by Peter Feuilherade. In November 2013, Mr. Feuilherade forecasted that by 2050, nearly 70 percent of the world’s population will be living in cities, resulting in an increasing number of “megacities” around the world (with population over 10 million) that will boost demand for smart buildings and housing.<sup>1</sup>

Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau reinforces his thesis. Based on 2012 data, re-migration and population growth in a number of major metropolitan areas in the U.S. is more than double the national average. This trend creates a variety of challenges and opportunities for city planners, infrastructure operators, and manufacturers. It also forms the basis for the smart cities movement. Cities compete for residents and businesses in the same way that retailers and manufacturers compete for customers.

The health of a city’s critical infrastructure plays an important role in this competition, heightening the importance for a number of issues that we organize through NEMA: Smart Grid, microgrids, and energy storage; building efficiency including benchmarking and disclosure; electrical system resilience; and the need for more sound and practical policy addressing energy and population issues.

An interesting sub-trend in this data deals with the aging of the “baby boomer” generation. Since 2007, the U.S. birth rate has been below the replacement rate, effectively skewing the population curve toward older Americans. The demographic significance of this manifests itself not only in residential migration, but also in healthcare treatment options. As with the electrical policy described above, the aging of the boomers heightens the importance of MITA, NEMA’s medical division, and its work with Smart Dose standards and reimbursement issues associated with sustainable growth rates for Medicare and Medicaid.

Big societal changes mean big challenges and even bigger opportunities for NEMA’s membership. The association’s leadership and the entire NEMA organization are committed to insuring we do our best to shape the future in a way that benefits all of our stakeholders. ☺

Christopher Curtis  
Chairman, NEMA Board of Governors

<sup>1</sup> [www.iec.ch/etech/2013/etech\\_1113/tech-2.htm](http://www.iec.ch/etech/2013/etech_1113/tech-2.htm)