Halo Celebrates 60 Years of Recessed and Track Lighting Leadership

For 60 years, Halo® has been the industry leader in recessed and track lighting providing innovative and contractor-friendly lighting products. State-of-the-art engineering; on-going research and development; meticulous product standards; and a tradition of unparalleled service have made the Halo product line one that builders know and trust. If fact, Halo’s longstanding industry leadership, brand equity and user preferences has been further reinforced as Halo has been chosen as the Brand Leader by Builder magazine subscribers for the last seventeen consecutive years, sweeping all four lighting categories this past year, including Brand Familiarity, Brand Quality, Brand Used in Past Two Years and Brand Used Most.

As Eaton celebrates Halo’s 60-year milestone this year, take a nostalgic trip and see the impressive journey of this industry-leading product line…going from a modest garage shop operation in 1956 to a giant in today’s lighting community.

1956 Halo Founded
The Halo Lighting Company was founded with the philosophy of manufacturing lighting fixtures that would be attractive, simple to install and easy to service.

When an order came in for a new recessed lighting product, four or five people would pitch in to assemble the product. Total employee count at Halo’s beginning was three people in the office and seven in the plant, which was located in a 3,000 sq. ft. building in Chicago’s near north side.

Halo’s product offering was small at first with about 30 products, and what was the first one? Why the H1 square downlight followed by the H2, then eventually Halo hit the jackpot with the H7 downlight. These early models pioneered the “Fit-All” concept, a universal housing that could accommodate multiple trim types to achieve different lighting effects and use a variety of lamp (light bulb) sizes and types.

The basic H7 housing had a plaster frame, junction box and bar hangers and its companion H107 “Unwired Housing” had a smaller plaster frame and a wiring compartment on the top of the can. Trims selections included 15 trims with some still in the line today and included finishes in chrome, brass, copper aluminum and white, which was known as Eggshell Paint and explains where the “P” for white came from (for those ordering the product) and still exists today.

The H7 “Fit-All” housing became the single biggest selling, most copied fixture in the lighting industry.

Flash Back
When the first Halo employees went home at the end of the day, they might have driven in a $1700 Plymouth with gasoline that cost 32 cents a gallon and the news of the day included the first space satellites launched in 1956 by Russia with the U.S a few months later. At home, Gunsmoke or Dick’s Clark’s American Bandstand on a 15-inch black and white TV that cost $259.95 might be watched. A new home in suburbia cost about $21,000 with a mortgage payment of $130.00. Of course let’s not forget that a good job paid about $4,000 yearly and the minimum hourly wage was 75 cents an hour.
1958 (through 2002) Halo Establishes Distributions Centers
In 1958, Halo went international by opening a distribution center in Toronto and in 1959, regional warehouses in California and New Jersey became Halo’s first in a network of national warehouses that brought Halo within easy reach of local customers. Additionally, distribution centers would be added later and each one would go through several rounds of expansion and/or relocation as Halo’s needs increased.

Flash Back
Distribution may be easier now as the economy is more geared to distribution with shipping giants like FedEx, UPS and other trucking companies, but back in the 1960’s, there wasn’t any emailing of shipping information or anything else for that matter. If you wanted to send some information you had to stick it in an envelope with a 3-cent stamp and wait a few day for it to arrive.

1960-1971 Halo Enters Into the World of Track Lighting
Halo’s sales may seem small when compared with today’s dollars, but growth was fantastic with Halo reaching the multi-million dollar plateau in its first few years and has never looked back. Recessed housings and trims continued to expand and 1963 saw Halo’s entry into the world of track lighting. It was a revolutionary product with roots in theatrical lighting. Track lighting provided a lighting system that was easy to install, could be adjusted and updated as lighting needs changed. It was an idea system for retail lighting and found a wide acceptance in commercial applications. The Halo product line helped establish track lighting in the light vocabulary with a blizzard of public relations, marketing and distributor support material. By 1968 millions of feet of track lighting had been installed in stores, museums and art galleries. Following the success in the commercial market, Halo produced a miniaturized version of track lighting for residential use.

1963-1975 Halo Moves Into New Digs in Rosemont, Illinois
Halo moved out of the industrial sections of Chicago and into a custom built building in a northwest suburb of Chicago. Halo came of age with a brand new 200,000 sq. ft. combination office and plant near Chicago’s O’Hare airport. This was a period of continued growth and activity and the building would undergo some significant expansions and remodeling during these years. This plant eventually included a finishing department where components were plated with brass, antique brass and chrome finishes. Assembly of recessed, track and decorative lighting products was all included under one roof. This building would be occupied until the early 1970’s when it was sold to the city of Rosemont and turned in O’Hare Exposition Center for conventions, expositions and special events.

Flash Back
Some of the photos in newsletter and other marketing materials from this time period show the difference between “then” and “now.” All the men are usually dressed in white shirts and narrow ties and there isn’t a computer in sight, but there are a lot of typewriters. Cubicles don’t exist and they put up real Christmas trees in the lobby.

Chapter 2
1967 Halo is Acquired by McGraw-Edison and Becomes “Halo Lighting Division – McGraw-Edison”
In 1967, Halo became part of a larger corporation when acquired by McGraw-Edison, a company based in Elgin, Illinois. The McGraw-Edison family included a number of well-known brands of the day including Speed Queen, Toastmaster and Bussman fuses. The corporation itself had only been finalized in 1957 when Max McGraw (whose business roots went back to the twenties) wrote a letter to the son of Thomas Edison suggesting a merger between their two companies. The name of Edison - “The Great Inventor” – continues in the Eaton stable of product lines today.
1967–1981 Roads No Longer Traveled
Besides the core business of recessed and track lighting products, the Halo product offering also included an extensive line of decorative fixture sold under the Lite-Trend brand name. This line included dining room and entryway chandeliers, bathroom striplights, hall and bedroom suspended fixtures, kitchen lights and even outdoor lanterns in both plastic and metal. A considerable portion of the company’s energy, manpower and resources went into promoting, developing and manufacturing the line until 1981 when Halo executives decided to devote its full energy to the recessed and track product lines. There was even a foray into flood and table lamps with the purchase of a company called Prestige Lighting. No mention of the decorative line is complete without the “Mad Hatters” line, a hanging globe that could be customized with a choice of two hats and vinyl stick-on cutouts to make different facial expressions.

Subsidiary operation in sales and even manufacturing were established in England and Germany in the early seventies, mostly for the track lighting line.

1969+ Growth and Consolidation
Some of the features that have made Halo the product line choice for contractors go back to this time period in Halo’s history. In 1969, the Halo recessed line added the “Feed-Thru” feature that simplified installation of multiple units and in 1982, Halo added integral thermal protectors to comply with new regulations for recessed fixtures. An Insulated Ceiling (IC)-rated housing was introduced in 1980. By 1985 there were eight models of the H7 and 40 trims.

In 1973, the track line added raceway and four-circuit track.

The current SOURCE Awards lighting competition was first established in 1977, sponsored by Halo and the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). The basic form of this competition has continued through today with thousands of entries received since then.

In 1978, Halo entered the indoor High Intensity Discharge (HID) lighting market and introduced a line of products that would later become the Portfolio product line of commercial incandescent, compact fluorescent, HID and now, LED interior fixtures.

Although Halo had always included a modest exit sign offering, it became a major player in the exit and emergency field with the acquisition of Sure-Lites in 1983.

1975-2001 Halo Moves Again
In 1975, Halo moved once more, this time to another custom build facility in another growing Chicago suburb called Elk Grove Village. The facility started out with 455,000 sq. ft. and was eventually expanded to over 800,000 sq. ft. It included offices, warehousing and assembly for recessed, track and decorative products for the next 25 years. It was by far the largest building located in the industrial park and also had the distinction of being the largest employer in the area at the time (the only larger employers in Elk Grove township was United Airlines).

In 1991, a major renovation added The SOURCE, the company’s state-of-the-art, hands-on, education center that showcased the whole range of lighting products and included classrooms where lighting professional could receive Continuing Education credits in their field.

Chapter Three
1985 Cooper Industries Acquires McGraw-Edison
In 1985, Halo entered a new area of lighting with the acquisition of Metalux Lighting, one of the premier manufacturers of fluorescent lighting for commercial, industrial and residential markets. Big news came later in 1985 when Cooper Industries acquired McGraw-Edison and its holdings included Halo, Metalux,
Sure-Lites and Bussman – product lines that still exist today. Cooper Industries was a Fortune 500 company with sales in the billions of dollars and a sophisticated corporate structure. Among its holdings was the Crouse-Hinds brand that traced its electrical manufacturing back to 1897.

1987 Cooper Lighting Formed
Cooper Lighting was formed in 1987, bringing together elements for the McGraw-Edison acquisition and Cooper Industries holdings. Eight major brands resulted from this union at the time including:
- Halo – Recessed, track and surface lighting products for residential and commercial markets
- Metalux – Floresent lighting for industrial, institutional and retail markets
- Lumark – Commercial and industrial HID lighting
- McGraw-Edison – Architectural HID fixtures for outdoor applications
- Sure-Lites – Exit and emergency lighting products
- Fail-Safe – Complex environments lighting products
- MWS – Modular Wiring Systems
- P&K – Poles for outdoor lighting applications

Additional brands were added since then and Halo became a lighting partner with Corelite, Shaper, IRIS, Lumière, Neo-ray, AtLite, Streetworks, Invue, Ametrix and io, among others.

1987-2006 Halo Still Grows
The Halo brand continued to grow and product innovations continued with significant growth in the area of low voltage, compact fluorescent and energy-efficient products such as the ENERGY STAR-certified H570 and H270 series. Contractor-friendly features such as the GOT NAIL! bar hangers, Slide-N-Slide junction box have made the Halo name the Number One choice of builders, remodelers and contractors.

In 2004, Halo introduced a unique line of hand-crafted Art Glass pendants, as well as the H3 product line of 3-inch aperture recessed downlights that literally brings a new dimension to lighting.

In 2006, the popular H7 family includes 39 housing styles and 92 trims offering the greatest variety ever of housings, trims and finishes. Halo products now have a global dimension with sales taking place in several countries around the world.

2001 Peachtree City
The new millennium saw the consolidation of Cooper Lighting activities in one location, Peachtree City, Georgia, with management, customer support, sales, marketing, warehousing and distribution all under one roof in the Customer First Center. In Peachtree City, Halo acknowledges its 50th anniversary and promises to continue the tradition of customer service, product quality and innovation that customers come to expect.

Chapter Four
2009 Halo’s First ENERGY STAR® LED Downlight
In 2009, Halo’s LED recessed downlight is the first in the industry to meet stringent ENERGY STAR requirements for solid state lighting luminaires. The downlight’s performance earns an ENERGY STAR certification, the first of many more to come.

2012 Eaton Acquires Cooper Industries
In 2012, power management company Eaton acquires Cooper Industries. The combination of Cooper and Eaton became a transformational milestone that expands market segment reach, broadens the portfolio of products, services and solutions, and strengthens global geographic footprint.
2014-Today Halo LED Product Line Continues to Expand
Halo continues to expand its offer of LED products including new recessed downlights and track lighting fixtures. In 2014, Halo introduces the SLD Surface LED Downlight featuring WaveStream® LED technology - the first of its kind in the industry. The unique surface-mounted luminaire can simply install into the junction box (or recessed housing) and perform like a traditional recessed downlight. Today, the SLD product line continues to expand, adding additional options to satisfy more applications.

2015 ENERGY STAR® Partner of the Year
Eaton is named by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a 2015 ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year winner and Halo is an important part to receiving this honor, which focuses on the company’s leadership in manufacturing ENERGY STAR-certified lighting products and educating customers about the environmental benefits when using energy-efficient products. Halo has hundreds of thousands of configurable models.

Today, Halo’s extensive recessed downlight offering of 3-inch, 4-inch, 5-inch and 6-inch aperture housings and trims continues to grow. And with the changing energy landscape and energy codes and legislation progress, Eaton will continue to work to understand customers’ business goals and develop innovative and reliable Halo products that meet and satisfy their needs.