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Powerful GloBugs turn night into day for crews working on Interstate 55

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Highway construction worker Mike McGillicuddy says he feels like he's surrounded by unidentified flying objects while on the job. Crews from United Contractors Midwest use GloBugs to illuminate their work area Tuesday along Interstate 55. There's no mystery to the lights he sees at night, though. They're GloBugs, powerful but glare-free "balloon lights" that enable McGillicuddy's contracting crew to work all night resurfacing Interstate 55 from north of Clear Lake Avenue south to East Lake Shore Drive. The lights, which are being used on Illinois Department of Transportation projects for the first time this year, provide optimum visibility for the crew, which is milling and resurfacing 6 1/2 miles of I-55 and a small portion of Interstate 72. "It gives us a near-daylight condition in the immediate vicinity of the machinery," said McGillicuddy, a Glenarm resident and area manager for United Contractors Midwest, the parent company of Illinois Valley Paving of Springfield, which is contractor for the nearly \$17.5 million project. There's the motorist-safety factor, as well. "I think the best part about them (GloBugs) is that traffic can see them from so far away," said Jared Smith, an equipment operator for the project whose crew works from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. Sunday through Thursday. Tim Thomas, equipment manager for UCM, said the GloBugs manufactured by Multiquip Inc. are



used because IDOT changed the lighting requirements written into its contract with the company. Before, the lights only had to be on the equipment. Now, the entire work area has to be lighted. "They put off a lot of light, and there's not a lot of glare," Thomas said. "It doesn't bother the guys working on the machines or the traveling motorists. "They (the GloBugs) do a really good job lighting up the project. Everyone on the project said they have been very pleased with the quality of light." Thomas said the company checked the lighting capability of several options and found that the GloBugs were best at reducing glare, which is one of IDOT's many requirements. A GloBug's nylon balloon encloses, diffuses and softens the light from a 1,000-watt halide bulb. According to a Multiquip representative, the list price for a single GloBug can be anywhere from \$4,000 to \$6,500, depending on the model. Thomas said the company paid about \$3,000 per light. About 40 UCM employees are working nights to complete the resurfacing, bridge rehabilitation, fence replacement and drainage repairs along the two interstates. The crew is using 20 GloBugs on this project. McGillicuddy said the company owns 35 such lights. Weather permitting, the I-55/I-72 road work should be finished in late September. Megan Sexton can be reached at 782-6882.

GloBug profile

The light system being used for nighttime resurfacing work on interstates 55 and 72 near Springfield uses lights called GloBugs, which are manufactured by Multiquip Inc. The visible part of the light actually is a 45-inch waterproof balloon that the manufacturer says inflates in 30 seconds. Lit by a 1,000-watt halide bulb and raised above the work area on a 13- to 16 1/2-foot stainless steel mast, each GloBug gives 360-degree glare-free lighting for about 150 feet, the manufacturer says. GloBugs can be used for search-and-rescue efforts,



special events, parking lot lighting and other nighttime needs. Power is supplied by either a 120-volt outlet or a 2,000-watt generator. Each GloBug costs about \$3,000. Twenty GloBugs are in use on the 6 1/2-mile-long I-55/I-72 construction project.

