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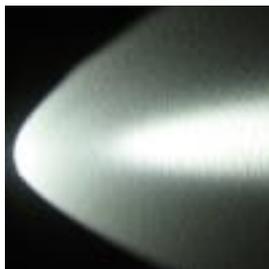http://outdoors-magazine.com

HDS Systems EDC Ultimate XRGT

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- Gear reviews and tests - Lamps and Lanterns -

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Description :

Another led light review.

My first impressions of my new HDS Systems EDC Ultimate 60 XRGT, the first programmable light I had ever possessed, were that it was simply too complex to be useful. It seemed to do something different every time I clicked the tailcap. Finally, I reached a turning point.

I decided to read the instructions.

Not ten minutes later all was well again, and I was having a lot of fun on top of it. I clicked my way through the options menu, programmed brightness menus to suit my taste, and tried out locater strobes.

Now over one month since I received my Ultimate 60, a lot of my former standby lights are not seeing use. In fact, many people are discovering that their Ultimate 60 is replacing their old favorites, and herein I'll attempt to explain why.

The EDC Ultimate 60 is machined out of aluminum, hard-coated with type III hard anodize. Color will vary slightly, but mine is a charcoal gray.

The knurling has a quite "grippy" feel. Workmanship is very impressive throughout; attention to detail in construction is remarkable.

This light is computer controlled- the brightness is regulated, the temperature of the light is monitored and automatically kept at a safe level, and you can use a variety of batteries with the light, including rechargeable lithium cells. Battery tubes will soon be made available that allow the use of other rechargables or two 123A batteries for even longer runtimes.

The weight is 3 ounces, and it is advertised as being waterproof to 2 atmospheres (33 feet) That's deeper than I care to venture, but I did submerge the light in a foot of water for a half hour, and no water had gotten past the O-ring seals.

The light is fed by a single 123A battery, and uses a Luxeon III emitter. Not just any Luxeon III emitter- the

designation XRGT assures that this line of lights has a fabulously pure white tint (GT= Guaranteed tint) and improved runtime over previous models by 50% (XR= extended runtime). Luxeon LED emitters are never identical in efficiency, brightness or tint due to slight manufacturing variances. Luxeon LEDs used in handheld lighting are very rarely "pure" white but often give off a slight green, blue, or purple tint. The LEDs placed in the XRGT lights are hand-selected for both tint and efficiency.

Here's a beamshot at 8 feet, next to that of a well-known 6-volt tactical light. Believe it or not, the maximum brightness of the Ultimate 60 has greater throw than the incandescent. That's a tremendous amount of light for one 123A battery to sustain, and though I initially doubted the advertised runtime of 30 minutes, a test revealed a runtime of approximately 35 minutes. I submerged the light in a container of water so the thermal-protection circuitry did not activate and reduce the output prematurely.

The LED is perfectly centered in a well-designed reflector and protected by a glass lens. Note that the phosphor-green of the LED die is evenly mirrored in all parts of the reflector.

A black-coated spring steel clip is included with the light, and may be installed with two Philips head screws if desired. Tension is a little on the light side, but not to bad.

Basic operation is as follows: There are four immediately accessible brightness options: minimum, primary, secondary and maximum. All four of them can be set to any of 20 light levels, which are visually even, and range from 0.3 to 60 lumens. Click once to turn the light on. As default, it will turn on to primary brightness. You are free to program the light to turn on to any of the four brightness levels, or simply whichever one you were using last.

When light is on: Double-click to toggle between secondary and primary. Triple-click for minimum Double-click-press for maximum.

In any brightness mode, you can simply hold down the button, and maximum brightness will pour out the bezel. When the button is released, the light returns to the brightness mode you were using.

To access the brightness menu and change your brightness settings a ten-click-press sequence is used. To access the options menu, a ten-click sequence is used. You can then select from these options: one click to move to the next option, double-click to reverse and move to the previous option.

Holding the button for 2 seconds will select the option you choose. This is indicated by two seconds of steady light. If your light flashes rapidly while in the options or brightness menu, you have made an error and no settings were changed. The options menu contains these modes:

Strobe - Flashes once a second at full brightness. Click button once to stop.

SOS - Flashes the international emergency SOS signal. Click button once to stop.

Locator Flash - This option can be real handy if you want a nightstand light. The light will flash very dimly and very briefly every three seconds when the light is off.

Force Setting - When enabled, light will always come on to selected setting.

Automatic Button Lock - Light will not accept commands after 5 minutes of no use. Triple-click while light is off to lock button, triple-click to turn lock off.

Automatic Turn Off - Turns light off after 5 minutes.

Simple Momentary - When light is off, if you hold down the button instead of preforming a fast click, the light will turn off again when button is released.

Tactical Momentary- This is a 'pure momentary' mode. When the button is depressed, the light is on. When it is released, the light is off. A "Soft reset" must be performed to turn this off- simply remove the battery for one minute. When batteries are reinstalled the light will come on at a dim level for a few seconds, indicating that a soft reset has been preformed.

This is an overview of the light's operation, for more information see the User's Guide

The Tailcap is well sealed; the button's travel is short and crisp. I have had no trouble with reliability.

Truly one of the finest and most advanced lights on the market, and one that, in the end, is surprisingly simple to use. The interface is simple, and now that I am used to it, the light does exactly what I want it to do, every time.

HDS offers many other lights in the EDC series, all of which use the same size aluminum body. The line-up currently includes two that generate up to 85 lumens. Also consider their non-programmable Basic series, if you like it simple.

HDS systems products
User's Guide (PDF)

The EDC Ultimate, EDC Basic, and many accessories are available from Advanced Tactical Technology