

Alliance to Save Energy – 2009 Energy Efficiency Awards

Nominee: Snohomish County Public Utility District (PUD)
Award Category: Galaxy Star of Energy Efficiency
Summary: Serving one of the fastest growing counties in the Pacific Northwest, Snohomish County PUD has committed to meeting load growth, first and foremost, through increased energy efficiency. In 2008, it worked with consumers and businesses to exceed its energy efficiency goals by 11 percent, achieving 6.9 average megawatts of energy savings, largely by launching new conservation initiatives and expanding existing programs. The utility has acted as regional leader in energy efficiency for more than 25 years. Cumulatively, it has saved 94 average megawatts of energy since the early 1980s – enough for nearly 70,000 homes.

Energy Efficiency Challenges:

While the PUD has developed successful energy efficiency programs for nearly three decades, the “low-hanging” fruit for business and residential customers is gone. Moreover, customers are increasingly fatigued as they’ve been inundated with messages about conservation and recycling. In addition, as the economy struggled in late 2008, many businesses were hesitant to make investments in energy efficiency, despite the potential for long-term savings, since it was harder to secure funds for up-front costs.

2008 Initiatives/Implementation

To meet aggressive energy efficiency goals, the PUD launched its *Be a Conservation Sensation* communications campaign, taking an unconventional, outside-the-box approach to get the attention of businesses and consumers. It used real people from the community to share conservation stories, making the campaign more authentic. It utilized a broad range of communications tactics, including TV and newspaper ads, publications/mailers, media relations, community events, contests and various specialty items. New and expanded energy efficiency programs provided impetus for increased customer participation, including:

- Higher incentive levels for businesses
- Increased emphasis on new construction
- New PC power management rebates
- More emphasis on small businesses
- Stronger trade ally relationships
- Additional appliance rebates (refrigerators)
- New varieties of compact fluorescent lights
- Regional programs/marketing (showerheads)
- Focus on low-income, multi-family segment
- Research/feedback tools for program review

Achievements:

- The PUD spent \$16.8 million in 2008 to achieve 60 million kilowatt hours of savings (6.9 aMW).
- This level of energy savings exceeded the goal of 5.6 average-megawatts set by the Northwest Power & Conservation Council, a regional trade organization that helps ensure a reliable and adequate regional energy supply.
- Energy efficiency programs reduced the output of CO₂ emissions by about 6,780 metric tons.
- Residential conservation programs reached 158% of goal in 2008.
- Sales of energy-saving light bulbs reached 203% of 2008 goal, with 3 million bulbs sold since 2000.
- The utility completed the highest number of business efficiency projects in over a decade (262), with grants for lighting improvements, heating/ventilation system upgrades and various other controls.
- Awareness of the *Conservation Sensation* campaign increased from 37% (May) to 58% (Nov.).
- A multi-year effort, a conservation voltage reduction program at 70 substations, has cut the PUD’s energy usage by 50,000 megawatt-hours annually – a yearly savings of about \$1.8 million.

Other Measures:

- The PUD was recognized for its conservation efforts in the information technology area by *Computerworld Magazine*, which named it one of the “Top 12 IT Companies” in 2008.
- Staff assumed key regional roles – as chair of the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, and on committees for the NW Energy Efficiency Taskforce, the Electric Power Research Institute and more.

- Numerous consumers and businesses participated in the PUD's conservation campaign by contributing stories/tips for PUD publications and its Web site.