

Mr. Jared Fuhriman, the Mayor of Idaho Falls, Idaho is nominated for the “Super Nova” Star of Energy Efficiency award for his leadership of the far-reaching and highly successful effort to dramatically increase energy efficiency across the service territory of Idaho Falls Power.

Idaho Falls Power is a municipal electric utility that has been in operation since 1900. The utility serves more than 22,000 residential and 3,600 commercial customers through a combination of city-owned run-of-river hydroelectric generation and power purchases (principally from the Bonneville Power Administration). Annual revenues exceed \$40 million from sales of more than 700 million kilowatt-hours.

Our little city of Idaho Falls isn’t the type of community generally associated with an aggressive energy efficiency campaign. Residential electric rates average less than six cents per kilowatt-hour, among the lowest in the nation. Environmental issues tend to take a back seat to fiscal policy and family values in most political discussions.

Yet despite this lack of external pressure, Mayor Fuhriman and the Idaho Falls Power staff saw the need for and benefits of an aggressive energy efficiency campaign. They knew the day would come when self-generated power and allocations from Bonneville would be insufficient to meet demand, and knew that could result in the need to add expensive generating assets or pay top-dollar on the spot market.

The Mayor and his staff knew the best way to keep electric rates low was to flatten or reverse projected load growth. Yet they also knew a call for greater efficiency would ring hollow unless the city itself took the first step. So the Mayor instituted a series of energy audits that will ultimately encompass all city buildings. After receiving the initial audit results, the Mayor directed that City Hall and two other buildings be retrofitted to reduce their electricity use.

After getting the city on a more energy-efficient footing, the Mayor called on local businesses to follow his lead. The Mayor made energy efficiency the focus of a series of speeches to community, business and school groups, and in August of 2008 issued a formal challenge to local business leaders that was covered by all three local network television stations and received extensive coverage in the local newspaper.

The Mayor and the General Manager of Idaho Falls Power recognized it wasn’t enough to simply tell businesses they should become more energy efficient; to be successful they also had to show them how to do it. So Idaho Falls Power phoned local businesses to promote its free energy-efficiency audits, recommended the most effective approaches to reduce energy consumption, and assisted the businesses in securing rebates and zero-interest loans to help offset the cost of retrofits.

The results have far exceeded expectations. More than fifty businesses have completed lighting retrofits and achieved more than 2.2 million kilowatt-hours of electricity savings in 2008. This ranked Idaho Falls Power number five among 130 utilities in Bonneville’s Commercial and Industrial Lighting Program, which includes much larger utilities like Seattle City Light and Tacoma Power. Another fifty local businesses have completed energy efficiency audits and many will be making retrofits in 2009. The energy savings from local businesses, coupled with electricity-saving efforts by the city and residential consumers, resulted in a total savings of more than 3.5 million kilowatt-hours in 2008.

To recognize these successes and promote further participation in the program, the Mayor presented his first annual Energy Efficiency Challenge Awards on January 20, 2009. These awards were widely reported and led to television and newspaper coverage across the state on the success of the Idaho Falls Power program.

The focus of the effort in 2009 will turn to increasing awareness of energy efficiency opportunities for all customer classes, especially residential customers. A new Energy Efficiency Education Center at Idaho Falls Power headquarters will be used to show residents how they can reduce their household energy consumption. The Center may include a mobile exhibit that will travel to schools and community events to help better spread the word about energy efficiency and about Idaho Falls Power’s free home energy audits. The city will also continue its support of energy education in the local school system, including the “Energy and Power Systems for Tomorrow” science elective the city helps sponsor at Skyline High School in Idaho Falls.

For championing a program that achieved electricity savings of more than 3.5 million kilowatt-hours in 2008 and is spurring greater energy efficiency state-wide, Mayor Jared Fuhriman is truly deserving of the Super Nova of Energy Efficiency Award.