

## You've Got the Power

by Terry Dugan

### Global warming. National security. Energy independence.

World class issues, to be sure, and directly related to two other immediate issues facing building owners and managers each and every day—keeping both operations humming and the bottom line in the black. The good news is that as building owners and managers, you've got the power to impact them all. By following a few easy steps towards energy efficiency, you can help reduce the energy drain and strain on your local utility's power grid (and the world energy demands), while maintaining the health and integrity of your ongoing operations and bottom line.



### Easier than you might think

Think of the buildings where you and your employees work, build, plan, sell, and service. Energy is consumed at every turn—in the machinery and equipment, lights, the plumbing, the space conditioning, the computers. Simple solutions, such as energy-efficient lighting, temperature sensors, and modern indoor comfort and air-quality systems, significantly lower energy consumption. They also make conditions more comfortable and productive for occupants.

More comprehensive projects may involve renewable energy systems, such as solar or geothermal, or cogeneration plants. These solutions improve a building's performance and sustainability while cutting down drastically on fossil fuel dependence. They also are well-suited to metropolitan retrofits—it's easier to secure a permit for an environmentally friendly geothermal system than for a new coal-burning boiler.

Benefits of energy-efficient measures extend beyond the building to the surrounding neighborhoods. Less strain on the energy grid means fewer brownouts. Lighting sensors mean safer parking garages. Modern high efficiency air-conditioning systems mean less noise. All combine for better 'corporate' citizenship all around.

### Energy efficiency all year long

Conserving energy during the summer's heat peaks is critical, but creating energy efficiency all year round is the best way to eliminate blackouts and brownouts altogether. A few tips for keeping energy consumption low throughout the year:



- *Get your finger on the pulse.* Keeping track of energy use throughout the year can be key to keeping a lid on use (and costs) during peak times. An easy way to get started: just pull out last year's bills and look for patterns. A clear understanding of consumption trends—when energy is used, where it is used, how it is used, and how much it costs—will help determine the most effective strategy.

- *Manage consumption.* Once you know when you use the most energy, you can start figuring out ways to decrease that use. But more important than *how* much energy you use is *when* you use it. Energy rates spike at high-use times, which are also the times when the power grid is most stressed. That means if you're not paying attention, you're probably paying too much as well as increasing the likelihood of an energy shortage.

- *Reduce your use.* Electronic control systems can be the greatest tool in managing consumption. Control systems can integrate all of your building's most energy-greedy systems—heating, lighting, and air conditioning—allowing you to schedule and program these functions accordingly to optimize productivity and minimize waste.

- *Ensure efficiency.* Most electronic equipment, including computers, has a secret. Just because their switches say "off" doesn't mean they're not using energy. Reduce unproductive energy use—known as "energy drain"—by setting computers' energy settings so that they hibernate when not in use, and turn them off overnight. For other equipment, if you can unplug them, that's the best way to ensure that they're truly "off."

Energy awareness is imperative these days. It's not simply about private sector responsibility; it's about productivity and profit. There's just no reason not to create an energy strategy for your buildings. When businesses monitor and manage their energy use, they exercise their considerable power to make a difference in the bottom line, as well as in the common good, and in both a global environmental and economic sense, that means everyone benefits.

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