



Energy use down 8.5% in 1 year: audits continue green initiative

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When was the last time you inspected your house for energy efficiency, running through an actual checklist of items based on common sense best practices?

York County has started doing just that, conducting energy audits of each of its main facilities to ensure maximum efficiency. The audits have a dual purpose: to save energy and money.

“This is part of the county’s overall green initiative,” explained General Services Director Bob Peters. “We want to do what’s best for the environment and reduce our energy consumption as much as possible. But increasing cost savings is also a primary goal.”

Peters’s crew has started surveying various county facilities, looking at such things as lighting, weather stripping, insulation, and heating and air conditioning performance, to assess and correct any potential problem areas.

“This is usually called an ‘opportunity audit,’” Peters said. “It’s basically a walk-through of the facilities, and it focuses on common sense issues. We have always maintained our buildings well, so we shouldn’t see any major problem areas that have been neglected over the years. This new initiative focuses solely on energy consumption issues.”

Peters has been monitoring the energy usage at the county’s 25 largest facilities for the past several years, using Energy Star’s Portfolio Manager program. By compiling utility bill usage data, he has determined that the county’s overall, weather-adjusted energy use is down 8.5 percent from 2008 alone, largely due to energy awareness and emphasis on optimizing the performance of county equipment.

“And that doesn’t reflect some new things we’ve recently done, like having all county computers automatically shut down overnight and installing more energy efficient lighting in a couple of our smaller facilities,” Peters added. “Those should help lower the usage numbers even more.”

In addition to allowing him to monitor the overall energy usage of the county, the utility bill data is also helping to pinpoint potential problem buildings.

“We are using the usage data to prioritize which buildings to audit,” Peters said. “And in the spirit of saving money, we’re looking for the little things that will pay back quickly while identifying major opportunities for future capital improvement. Sometimes the little changes can make a big difference and that’s what we’re targeting with this effort.”

In the attached picture, Facilities Maintenance Manager Danny Warthan, left, and Master HVAC Technician Charlie James, right, perform preventive maintenance on an air conditioning unit to ensure it is operating at peak efficiency.



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