

Ventura County Retrofits for Energy Conservation

by Danny McGrath

In the summer of 2007 the Ventura County Board of Supervisors began preparations for its Climate Change Action Plan. This was in response to the State of California's development of regulations to control greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Energy consumption is one of the largest contributors to the county GHG inventory. Hence, the goal of reducing energy consumption is twofold: saving money and reducing carbon emissions.

As of October 2008 the Ventura County General Services Agency (GSA) has completed 12 substantial energy conservation projects. Four additional projects are in progress and 17 more are in the planning stages. These projects include lighting retrofits and upgrades, improvements to heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, and the use of variable frequency drives (VFDs) on motors.

The GSA is responsible for maintaining approximately 130 buildings including county fire, sheriff, courts, probation, and human services. The GSA has developed its own [Energy Action Plan](#) with five guiding principals:

1. Identify and implement opportunities to minimize the energy intensity in GSA maintained buildings through the implementation of energy efficient projects;
2. Promote behavioral changes within the organization that enhance energy conservation;
3. Pursue green buildings programs such as the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED);
4. Identify opportunities for self generation of electricity from renewable sources;
5. Minimize electricity expenditures through management of utility rate structure and incentives.

Using these guidelines, the GSA seeks to reduce energy costs and reduce the GHG footprint from its operations. Based on increases in utility rates, measures to reduce energy consumption are financially prudent and will pay for themselves through the reduction of electricity and gas expenditures.

The completed projects combined with those in progress will yield an estimated annual avoidance of 1,883,000 Kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity which equates to an estimated cost avoidance of \$226,000 and a reduction of 942 tons of GHG with an average payback of 3.3 years. The initial cost of the completed and in progress projects is \$1,142,347.

Ventura County Energy Manager, Allan Sandosham, sits in on project meetings and “pushes” the energy efficiency agenda, while realizing that this is not the only consideration on the agenda. For example, while energy efficiency may call for turning off exterior lights in a parking area, security concerns may call for the lights to be left on. Turning lights to half brightness and using motion detectors can be a workable compromise.

Sandosham reports that his largest obstacle is simply time constraints. There are so many projects that can be implemented, but only a limited number can reasonably be carried out at a time. It is not about budget as much as getting the work done. The lists of possibilities for conservation are seemingly limitless.

Reducing GHG is an issue that is receiving increasing attention for municipalities, and with rising petroleum costs, conservation is now a cost saving solution. The success of the Ventura County energy conservation program points to a brighter and cleaner tomorrow.



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Ventura County 2007-2008 Energy Action Plan

Author Organization: County of Ventura General Services Agency

Ventura County is embarking on a comprehensive energy action plan to implement an energy action policy in accordance with California's new ordinances on greenhouse gas emissions.

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 [GSA 2007-2008 Energy Action Plan.pdf](#) (Adobe Acrobat Document, 71 KB)

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