

Energy Improvements in Barnstable County

Residents Focus on Upgrading Technologies, Operations and Design

Summary

Barnstable County, located on the coast of Massachusetts, is working with 15 towns to reduce energy use county wide. Officials hope to accomplish this by making operations and design modifications to targeted public buildings. Rebuild America and the Cape Light Compact - an organization whose energy-efficiency efforts extend to more than 20 towns and two counties - are key partners in the County's initiative. Energy savings in the residential sector is also a top priority of the partnership.

Challenge

Barnstable County's population of more than 205,000 residents triples during peak summer months. To reduce energy bills, the County made a concerted effort to educate the public on energy use and good practices. Many offices and residences used older, inefficient technologies, including outdated lighting fixtures and energy-wasting dehumidifiers.

Solution

To transform energy-saving ideas into practice, the County joined Rebuild America in May 2002. Through efforts supported by the Massachusetts Division of Energy Resources Rebuild Massachusetts Program, county officials, residents, business owners and other community members are realizing the financial and environmental benefits of energy-efficiency improvements.

Cape Light Compact and Applied Proactive Technologies sponsored an event in October 2002 in Yarmouth. More than 1,500 Barnstable County residents attended the first-ever Energy Fair to trade-in inefficient technologies for rebates on efficient, ENERGY STAR® products. Consumers exchanged more than 220 torchiere floor lamps and 300 dehumidifiers for rebates of up to \$90 from Cape Light Compact and Sears, Roebuck and Company. Dehumidifiers can consume up to 1,000 kWh per year, almost as much as a refrigerator! ENERGY STAR dehumidifiers are 10-20 percent more efficient than older models. The turned-in units were recycled.

Mercury fever thermometers were also turned in for new digital thermometers. Residents used rebates obtained at the Fair to purchase nearly 1,000 energy-efficient products. Use of these products will generate projected annual savings of more than 280,000 kWh of electricity in the community.

The success of the Energy Fair inspired the County Commissioner to install compact fluorescent models, replacing decorative light fixtures in County offices in December 2002. With funding assistance from the Cape Light Compact, the County was only responsible for \$230 of the total retrofit investment. Savings from this improvement will yield more than \$400 annually creating a return-on-investment of less than seven months. More importantly, the County is leading by example on energy-saving measures.

Rebuild America and the state Rebuild Massachusetts partnership emphasized the importance of energy education in schools to Barnstable County officials to complement the energy-efficiency retrofits and improvements in the community. The National Energy Education Development (NEED) project, a Rebuild America Strategic Partner, is helping the County introduce an energy curriculum into third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms. All NEED materials meet state and national education requirements. Professional training for teachers on the curriculum is currently underway. Barnstable County schools will begin implementing energy education in fall 2003.