

HOMEGROWN INNOVATIONS: WISCONSIN'S CLEAN AND BALANCED ENERGY FUTURE

As a society, we take pride in our homes. We perform annual maintenance, tend the yard in the summer, and make home improvements when our budgets allow. Regardless of whether you live in a 100-year old farmhouse in the country or a new condominium in the heart of the city, we all know the increasing importance of energy independence, and most of us look for ways to save money on our home energy expenses.



Using innovative and efficient products and renewable energy sources not only creates more independence it can save you money and reduce the pollution in your community. Nowadays, you will find that many household appliances have an energy-rating of some kind. Something as simple as replacing an old refrigerator with a new Energy Star® model will save you enough electricity that it's like getting three weeks of your home's electricity bill for free, every year! And advances in renewable energy sources, like solar panels and wind turbines, have reduced initial start-up costs and raised the return on investment. Renewable energy can provide all or part of your home's heating and electric needs. For example, installing solar panels not only improves your home's energy security and independence, it can increase the market value of your home as energy prices rise.

There are numerous programs available to Wisconsin residents to help reduce energy use and costs. One such program is called Focus on Energy and is part of Wisconsin's Public Benefits program (see sidebar for more details on Public Benefits). Focus on Energy is a public-private partnership offer-

ing energy information and services to energy utility customers throughout Wisconsin. The goals of the program are to encourage energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, enhance the environment and ensure the future supply of energy for Wisconsin. Since July 2001, the program has helped Wisconsin's businesses and residents cut their utility bills by more than \$74 million - reducing their energy consumption by more than 703 million kilowatt-hours and more than 32 million therms of natural gas. That's the same energy value as 1.9 billion barrels of oil or preventing the annual emissions from more than 141,389 cars. These are huge savings!

WISCONSIN'S OPPORTUNITY FOR A CLEAN AND BALANCED ENERGY FUTURE

In September 2003, Governor Doyle created the Task Force on Energy Efficiency and Renewables, which included members from the utilities, customer groups, environmental groups, labor, industry, agriculture, and legislators from both major parties. The Task Force was asked to reach a consensus on ways to promote or invest in efficiency and renewable energy to help economic growth, decrease our dependence on out-of-state energy, and reduce the environmental harm from fossil fuel power plants. The ultimate goal is to restore Wisconsin as a leader in efficiency and renewable energy solutions.

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PUBLIC BENEFITS FUND

Wisconsin's Public Benefits program, which encompasses energy conservation, renewable energy development and low-income services, was created in 1999 as part of the Reliability 2000 package promoted by then Governor Thompson and adopted by the Wisconsin Legislature. The establishment of a Public Benefits fund was supported not only by environmental and low-income advocacy organizations, but also consumer and business groups, senior citizens, labor unions, retirees, and many utilities. Source: <http://www.renewwisconsin.org>

The Task Force worked together for more than a year and in October 2004 released recommendations on how we move forward, beginning with state buildings and agencies leading by example. There are numerous benefits in embracing energy efficiency and using renewable technology:

- **Energy efficiency programs return direct energy-savings benefits well in excess of their program costs** (e.g. one dollar spent on conservation pays back three in energy costs saved.)
- **Saving energy keeps money in Wisconsin** - reducing energy bills means keeping dollars from leaving the state to buy imported fossil fuels like coal and natural gas. Wisconsin currently spends \$8 billion dollars for imported fossil fuels.
- Renewable efforts, like an investment in solar panels to heat water or wind turbine energy, provides an **excellent hedge against the rising and volatile price of natural gas and coal.**

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Now is the time for Wisconsin to become a leader in efficiency and renewable energy solutions. To assist in this, here are some things you can do:

1. Join other Wisconsin businesses and residents and sign Clean Wisconsin's resolution asking for a more balanced energy policy, increased energy independence, energy efficiency, and renewable options to help reduce bottom line costs. For more details, call Keith Reopelle at 1-608-251-7020, ext. 11 or email kreopelle@cleanwisconsin.org.
2. Contact Focus on Energy to find out more about the program that can help reduce your energy costs. Call 1-800-762-7077 or visit www.focusonenergy.com.
3. Contact your legislator and ask for a more balanced energy policy, making clean energy and efficiency a priority in our state. You can find your legislators contact information by calling 1-800-362-9472 or visiting <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/waml>
4. Purchase Energy Star® appliances and use compact fluorescent light bulbs.



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