

Lamey-Wellehan's approach to cutting energy use

-Jim Wellehan

Joining the Governor's Carbon Challenge was precisely that, a challenge. To cut energy utilization, save money, and take action to reduce the march of global warming. It was a learning challenge, and one which we continue. Below are the steps that we took to reduce our energy costs and carbon footprint.

1. Get an audit from Efficiency Maine.
2. Update all bulbs to T-8's or T-5's, depending on the application.
3. Change temperature settings to 68 degrees in the winter and 75 in the summer.
4. Install new "difficult to tamper with" thermostats in each location.
5. Review the need for lighting, and eliminate lights where superfluous. Common areas can regularly be over-lighted.
6. Install sensors in the bath rooms. Have fans on timers separate from the light switch.
7. Review and reduce time durations of outside lights. Move some to sensors.
8. Try new energy-efficient bulbs in the display lighting. New halides, LEDs, and even CFLs.
9. Use bio-diesel in the company truck.
10. Switch company vehicles to Priuses.
11. Install transparent plastic strips (like the grocery stores used to hang in the frozen food compartments) in the freight/service entrances.
12. Move to Energy Star rating on any new appliances or office machines.
13. Make sure that all printers, screens, copiers are off when not in use.
14. Involve all associates in the process. Have them take responsibility for making sure lights are off when their office area is not in use.
15. Look at Heat Loss through windows, doors, etc. See what can be done to tighten, or to use daylighting to improve lighting and reduce heat loss.
16. Replace old heating – especially electric – with gas – or air exchange like Hallowell.
17. Measure, Measure, Measure. Set up spread sheets for each location/area/activity measuring the use of KWH, Oil, Natural Gas, Propane, etc. on a monthly basis, and share that information with all.
18. Attend Energy Conferences. NESEA is among the best.

Early Projects for 2008

1. Install fans (We will experiment in one location first) to move heat down from the ceiling in the winter, provide cooling air movement in the summer.
2. Put up a parking lot sign saying

***"Thank you for not idling!"
this is a no-idling parking lot.
Together we can make a difference!***

We have two remodels/relocations this year. In each case, before any lease is completed, we will get an energy audit from Efficiency Maine. Working out an arrangement with any landlord will involve making sure that the buildings energy standards are high, and that whatever steps are required to achieve this goal will be done, and that those economics will be fully accounted for in any pro-forma.

The result of these steps has been to flat-line our energy costs for three years, while we were able to show good sales growth. Both of these will require tremendous energy to achieve in the next year, but we are grateful for the impetus provided by the Governor's Carbon Challenge. We have worked hard to develop the Cool Communities movement in our towns, as the economics and environmental concerns coincide perfectly. While the primary motivation for all this has been economic and environmental enhancement, it has also been a help in marketing our business. There has never been a time when being green made more sense from any perspective.

Lamey-Wellehan has long had a green bent, recycling 95% of our solid waste since 1994. We use recycled materials as strongly as possible, and all of our carpet is made of recycled materials and will itself be recycled again when it is taken up. We refurbish and re-use fixtures and furniture, even when the cost is the same or more than the cost of new. We have even managed to build stores with 65% reused/recycled material. We have replaced our traditional plastic bags with vegetable oil bags that will bio-degrade in six to twelve months, depending on the conditions in which it is left. These bags came at a 10% premium, but that premium had already been paid with energy cost savings. Our 21% reduction from 2004 to 2006 was primarily achieved with things with a payback of months, and none was more than a few years. We believe that our carbon reduction continued in 2007. Every action we take is geared to take carbon reduction (cost savings!) into account.