Electric Supply Inc. Says Going 'Green' Has Never Been Easier

By Don Harris

Going green in an environmental sense, makes real sense as school districts grapple with budget shortages that could last for the next few years.

What's more, going green has never been so easy. That's the message from experts at Electric Supply Inc., a family-owned Arizona company, who told AASBO members, during a breakout session at AASBO's Summer Conference in Tucson, how they can save energy – and money.

Sales Manager Rob Wengrzyn and his team, including John Dean, lighting specialist, explained how a comprehensive energy-efficient lighting program can help school business officials reduce costs now and in the years ahead.

"You can adopt a lifestyle that does less damage to the environment," Rob says. "Going green helps keep employees employed and productive, leaving more money in the budget for other expenses. With lighting accounting for 30 percent of your energy costs, reducing those costs also helps your business environment."

John assesses various types of lamps and ballasts, and suggests that halogens are big energy users. "Some lamps, including the T-12 fluorescent, are obsolete and won't be manufactured within the next few years, so you'll have to change," he says.

Demand Control Technology, touted by John, gives school districts the ability to control their lighting in several ways.

"You can vary your light output by circuit for multi-level lighting, dimming is achieved by a fade rather than an incremental decrease and dimming is virtually imperceptible to the human eye," John says. "Demand control lighting gives you complete control over your lighting system. It's great for a school district. You can control lighting in each school according to need."

For example, through the use of photo-cells, timers and photo-sensors, schools can set a certain level of light for when teachers arrive, and increase lighting intensity to a desired level when students are in the classroom, according to John.

"It's great for saving energy," he says.

A concern was raised from an AASBO member that because technology is advancing so fast, replacement parts for a new demand-control system might not be available in five years. Would the school have to buy an entirely new lighting system in a few years? John assured AASBO members that would not be the case.

He stated that the example that was shown to AASBO members indicated a $122,000 lighting job that, after all the rebates and energy savings were calculated, the customer actually made more than $6,000 the first year, with residual energy savings of more than $44,000 per year moving forward.

John told of a lighting project at Phoenix College. Electric Supply discussed with the college their lighting needs, which had been quoted as a $30,000 system. With a new product on the market called Demand Control Lighting, the cost to meet the lighting needs of the college, including lamps and ballasts, was $3,200. "It's a simple system and they're getting twice as much lighting for one-tenth of the cost," John says, "and they have far more control than any system on the market today."

Rob explains that Electric Supply is committed to helping customers save energy, which helps them reduce and control costs.

"In today's business environment, 'green' is a buzz word attached to a lot of different products, services, and subjects," Rob says. "Electric Supply, which has been in business since 1952, has worked to make going green as simple as possible."

The program focuses on three areas: rebates available from utility companies for converting to energy efficient products; tax incentives from the government for converting to energy efficient products; and bottom line energy savings for using products that are more energy efficient.

"In most cases," Rob says, "the payback period is no more than a year and the energy cost savings last forever. In addition, with extended warranties maintenance costs are greatly reduced."

In response to a comment from an AASBO member, Rob confirmed that federal tax breaks would not go directly to the school, but to the designer of the energy efficient lighting system. Rob suggested that the price for the work could be reduced to reflect the amount of a federal tax break, depending on the specifics of the job.

In addition, warranties cover malfunctions for up to five years. "So if anything breaks," Rob says, "there's no money out of your pocket."

Information regarding rebates offered by two major utilities in Arizona are listed below.

Salt River Project offers 25 cents per watt of reduced lighting, and $50 to $100 per ton for the energy efficiency of an HVAC unit. Contact is Isaac Jaten at (602) 236-1616.

Arizona Public Service offers lighting rebates ranging from $5 to $75 per unit, and cooling rebates with a base incentive of up to $50 per ton, plus an efficiency incentive up to $300 per ton. Contacts are Ed Walsh and Bill Biesemeyer at (602) 385-0900.

"We know you guys at the schools are getting squeezed," Rob says. "To make it more convenient for schools, you won't have to write a check right now. We can direct you to a company that will help you finance the work, and typically the finance portion is equal to the energy savings and energy rebates, so the school does not have anything out of pocket." ■

Electric Supply Inc. can be reached at: www.electricsupply.com or by phone at (602) 252-2343 or (520) 573-9955.

If you really want to do something,
you'll find a way;
if you don't, you'll find an excuse.

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