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Office Design & Equipment Light Savers

To cut utility costs, Alii Place and Pacific Energy Services have rolled out their own power-saving program.

By Cathy S. Cruz

Thirty percent. That's how much a company saves on monthly utility bills by replacing its lights with energy-efficient T8 models. \$7.5 million. That's the total amount of rebates Hawaiian Electric Co. has awarded to local companies that have purchased energy-saving equipment over the past five years.

In the first half of 1996 (the program's pilot year) Hawaiian Electric awarded \$600,000. Last year, the electric company shelled out rebates worth \$1.7 million, a slight drop from 1998, when rebates reached a peak of \$1.9 million. "We had a lot of early adopters, but the program has started to level out," says Keith Block, program manager for Hawaiian Electric.

The transition to T8 lights so far has been the simplest, and most common, energy-saving solution for the majority of Hawaii companies. Other changes have included new chillers, air-conditioners and the temperature controls for milk machines. Although 80 to 90 percent of rebate recipients are large corporations, Hawaiian Electric this year has been pushing small- to mid-size businesses and hotels to join the rebate program, Block says.



Power Trip: Hollis Johnson and Darren J. Kimura plan to cut utility costs for Alii Place.

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One commercial building in downtown Honolulu plans to achieve star status. Alii Place, managed by PM Realty Group, already has earned up to \$78,000 in rebates since 1996. Its next step is to be the first non-government structure in Hawaii to earn the prestigious Energy Star title — an official stamp of approval by the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy. Buildings that bear the Energy Star label rank in the nation's top 25 percent, in terms of energy performance. The only other agency-approved structure in Hawaii is the Prince Kuhio Kalaniano'le Federal Building and Courthouse on Ala Moana Boulevard.

Reaching that status won't happen overnight. The agency sets guidelines for all elements of energy, including thermal comfort, lighting levels, energy efficiency and indoor air quality. To expedite the benchmark process, PM Realty last January formed a partnership with Honolulu-based Pacific Energy Services, an engineering group that helps businesses slash energy costs through efficient means.

The group as of press time was conducting a detailed energy-consumption assessment at Alii Place, a 25-floor building. "The EPA has very stringent requirements," says Darren T. Kimura, President of Pacific Energy Services. "Only 150 companies in the nation have achieved that benchmark status. GE, Microsoft, Intel. Those are some of the benchmarked buildings."

Once Alii Place becomes the nation's first private building with an Energy Star label, it no doubt will help save money for its 1,300 occupants and future tenants, says Chief Engineer Hollis Johnson. Building maintenance managers anticipate to save 30 percent in utility bills. Alii Place's energy consumption from October 1999 to December 2000 ranged between \$56,091 to \$74,068. Meanwhile, the building's two centrifugal chillers are programmed to run between 2 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays and from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekends. Except during the holiday season, only exterior door lights are on at night. And on weekends, elevators in Alii Place are shut off, except for two in the main building and one in the parking garage.

These measures are important if a company wants to save money and energy, especially in Hawaii, says

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Block. “All over the mainland U.S., everybody is connected to a nationwide grid. They can buy power from other states. In Hawaii, we have to rely on ourselves for power.”

[July 2000](#)

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