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Lopez Energy Efficiency Projects Get Big Rebates from OPALCO

OPALCO handed out two big checks on Lopez last week: \$43,675 to the Lopez School District for their HVAC project and \$37,567 to the Lopez Village Market for energy efficiency measures installed in the new store. OPALCO has a full menu of energy efficiency rebates available to commercial and residential members. OPALCO partners with Bonneville Power Administration's Conservation Program and Portland Energy Conservation, Inc.'s EnergySmart Program (www.peci.org) on bigger commercial projects.

In her presentation of the checks, Energy Services Assistant Manager Anne Bertino explained, "Energy efficiency and conservation are the keys to keeping our rates lower as we move into a tiered rate structure with Bonneville Power Administration. In the near future, our relatively inexpensive, mostly hydro power (tier one rates) will be available only up to a ceiling measured by our current load as a coop. For any load growth, we will have to pay potentially higher rates (tier two rates) that will fluctuate depending on the market and available resources. The more energy efficient we can become NOW as a coop, the longer we can avoid tier two rates in the near future." General Manager Randy Cornelius added, "OPALCO applauds the Lopez School District and Lopez Village Market for their commitments to energy efficiency. As bigger power users, their efforts will make a bigger positive impact on our overall efficiency and load management as a coop."

The Lopez School District installed a new sophisticated and efficient HVAC and ventilation system into both school buildings. The School District is estimating a savings of 200,342 kWh— or about \$14,825 each year. "We believe that the school should be a community leader in energy conservation measures," stated Superintendent Linda Martin. "Our futures depend on thoughtful stewardship of our limited resources."

The HVAC system, called **Variable Refrigeration (VRF)**, is a type of a ductless split heat pump that connects multiple indoor units to a single larger outdoor condensing unit. This condensing unit is capable of modulating the amount of refrigerant it distributes throughout the multiple indoor units depending on need—so that one area can be heated while another stays cool. One of the major efficiency advantages of these systems is the capability of extracting heat from one area (thus cooling that area) and distributing that heat to another area without energizing the outdoor condensing unit. This is an extreme energy savings. The energy recovery ventilators are designed to extract heat from the exhaust air, transferring it to the incoming supply air, thus preheating cold outside air with existing indoor conditions and providing fresh air ventilation without loss of heat. This system will be the future of American HVAC. That puts Lopez Island School on the cutting edge of future high efficiency HVAC systems.

Randy Cornelius and Anne Bertino also gave the Lopez School District a package of Kill-A-Watt meters and a check for \$400 in support of their elementary school energy efficiency curriculum. Cornelius praised the District for “their leadership in energy efficiency the good work they are doing to educate the next generation of energy consumers.”

In their move to the new building, Lopez Village Market upgraded and replaced compressors, controllers and motors to the most efficient systems available. New efficient reach-in freezer cases were installed—and these alone represent a savings of 40,188 kWh per year. The total energy savings for this project are estimated at 278,427 kWh—or about \$20,605 each year. OPALCO worked with Portland Energy Conservation Inc. (PECI) to help the Market with this project. “The EnergySmart Grocer program works with grocers to assist in the adoption of energy efficiency technologies to improve their bottom line,” said Paul Given of PECI. “The program benefits everyone with lower energy costs and a reduction of impact on the environment.”

In addition to the energy savings that will help keep costs down for the community, a number of local contractors were employed on this project, bringing a timely economic boost to the community. Lopez Sand and Gravel provided the site work, Com-Steel (Bellingham) did the steel work and Friday Harbor Electric provided the electrical.

Whether you want to increase your energy efficiency at home or in your business, the first step is to schedule an Energy Assessment. A professional Building Performance Institute (BPI) certified contractor will give you a top to bottom assessment of your building and show you where potential savings could be found—and which measures would give you the most bang for the buck. OPALCO has a full range of residential weatherization rebates available for insulation, window replacement, duct and air sealing projects. In many cases, there are also state and federal rebates available. For commercial projects, OPALCO will work with business owners on custom projects for lighting, refrigeration and HVAC upgrades. It’s not too late to prepare for the coming heating season; you could see savings immediately!

For more information on OPALCO’s energy efficiency rebates—and to learn about the many ways that you can save on your energy bill, go to www.opalco.com/energy-services (or call 376-3586).

OPALCO is a member-owned cooperative electrical utility serving more than 11,000 members on 20 islands in San Juan County. OPALCO provides electricity that is 95% greenhouse-gas free and is predominately generated by hydro-electric plants. OPALCO was founded in 1937 to bring electricity to rural islanders.

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