

Hawaii Energy introduces Central Plant Optimization Competition

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Hawaii Energy is ramping up its efforts to help curb Hawaii's costly dependence on imported oil with a new offering and competition for 2011 that challenges building managers and owners to improve overall operations -- ultimately saving both money and the environment at the same time.

The recently launched "Central Plant Optimization Competition" from Hawaii Energy assists building managers with investigating ways to improve the operation and maintenance of their facilities.

This new program is an inclusive and systematic process that optimizes how equipment and systems operate independently, as well as how the systems work together. In-turn, the program will reduce energy waste, fix underlying problems and result in energy cost-savings for owners.

Hawaii Energy's Central Plant Optimization Competition will provide 100 percent of the funding for installing or upgrading metering and monitoring systems. The information gathered from the monitoring will then be used to determine the performance of each component of the system.

Data will be used to establish the baseline performance numbers and as measure energy reduction as a result of actions taken. Hawaii Energy will pay for 50 percent of the fees for an energy professional to determine metering requirements, develop ideal sequence of operations and use the data collected to understand how the system is operating.

The program will build a team to determine the short- and long-term actions necessary to improve the efficiency and performance of the system, as well as a training and maintenance plan. Recommended low-cost and no-cost measures must be implemented as well as plans and commitments for long-term improvements with paybacks of less than two years.

"Central plants are akin to complex, living entities that need to be monitored and maintained," said Hawaii Energy deputy program manager, Michael Chang. "In order to achieve the highest optimization, it is essential to train operators and monitor various parameters; these combined actions will ensure that systems are not only operating properly, but maximize the performance potential."

Chang created the program and competition as a tool to encourage enhanced energy efficiency at commercial properties by making it simple and affordable to implement the necessary changes.

By implementing a system commissioning program, metering system and energy-reduction measures, a typical building can shave significant costs off their electricity bill with low or no cost measures. This is due to lower energy usage as well as reduced operational problems and improved occupant comfort. Other benefits include detection of potential problems, accurate tune-up of HVAC systems and controls, improved building documentation, specially-trained building operators, lower operation and maintenance cost, as well as a safe and healthy work environment.

The results of the competition will be collected to determine the most efficient central plant systems. Winners selected from 12 categories will be announced in June 2011 and will receive prizes and recognition from Hawaii Energy.

“Competition ignites effort. It is through competition that once impossible levels of performance are achieved,” Chang added.

The impact of this program will be enhanced through sharing of competition results with peers to raise the level of central-plant performance in Hawaii.

Eligible facilities include commercial properties with central-plant systems that have reasonable potential energy savings to be achieved through commissioning efforts on the islands of Hawaii, Maui, Molokai, Lanai and Oahu.

All incentives will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and are limited to the availability of allocated funds for the program year.

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