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August, 2008

Article for *Minnesota Counties*

Best Practices Review Focuses On Reducing Energy Costs

By Rebecca Otto, State Auditor

Energy costs are a growing concern for counties and local governments throughout Minnesota. Some great things are being done by local governments to reduce energy costs, and these innovative measures are the focus of the Best Practices Review of Reducing Energy Costs, recently released by The Office of the State Auditor.

How the Review Can Help

As energy expenditures continue to increase, more pressure is being put on county budgets. These cost increases can impact service delivery. Adding to that, public awareness has increased around energy issues, creating more reason for counties to reduce their energy use.

The Best Practices Review is designed to assist county officials in making informed decisions for reducing their energy costs. The Review includes recommendations for steps to best practices and provides cost/benefit analyses on different types of technologies and services that help reduce energy costs.

Case Studies Highlight Best Practices

The Review features case studies which highlight best practices in nine important areas: Lighting Retrofit, Geothermal Heating and Cooling, Passive Solar Energy, Active Solar Energy, Wind Energy, Displacement Ventilation, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification and Energy Performance Contracts. Participating communities and governmental entities included St. Louis County, Washington County, the City of Minnetonka, the Watertown-Mayer School District, Scott County, the City of Minneapolis, the Pipestone-Jasper School District, Blue Earth County, and the Anoka-Hennepin School District.

Easy to Use

In surveying local governments, one obstacle to reducing energy costs that was identified is access to financial resources. To address that, the online version has live Internet links that connect users directly to accessible financing resources, bringing Local Government officials right to the money. It also contains links to information resources and cost calculators to help crunch numbers.

Local governments and counties throughout Minnesota are taking innovative and effective measures to reduce their energy costs. Across entities of varying sizes, steps are being taken to find ways to trim energy expenditures. The Best Practices Review helps point out how these wise investments not only help reduce operating costs, but also help hedge against rising energy costs.

The complete report can be found on our website on the homepage at: www.auditor.state.mn.us. A paper copy can also be requested by contacting Jim Levi at 651-297-3683 or by email at Jim.Levi@state.mn.us.