

PROFILE: SUPERIOR WATER LIGHT & POWER

ENERGY INSIGHT LINKS UTILITY CUSTOMERS WITH ENERGY-EFFICIENCY RESOURCES



Focus on Energy presented the Hampton Inn Superior/Oliver Companies with a 2018 Energy Efficiency Excellence Award at the new hotel in Superior, WI. Pictured (left to right): Robert Sandstrom, Manager-Customer Excellence, SWL&P; Joleen Jensen, Energy Advisor, Focus on Energy; Frank Barth, Stakeholder Manager, Focus on Energy; Russ Liupakka, Energy Consultant, SWL&P (Energy Insight, Inc.); and Jim Toninato, President of Construction, Oliver Companies.

“We’re not selling any equipment, and we’re not associated with any electrical or heating contractor. We just provide information that SWL&P customers can use to get the greatest energy efficiency out of their projects and make it easy for them to access resources.”

Russell Liupakka,
Energy Analyst
Energy Insight, Inc.

Businesses continually look for ways to save money, and investing in energy efficiency is a great place to start. Relatively simple improvements, such as switching to high performance LED lighting, installing variable frequency drives on motors, and upgrading heating and air conditioning systems, can save businesses thousands of dollars per year in avoided energy costs and literally pay for themselves.

Many companies and organizations in Superior, Wisconsin, have discovered these benefits thanks to expertise and resources available through Superior Water, Light & Power (SWL&P). Energy Insight administers SWL&P’s energy conservation program on the utility’s behalf.

“Energy Insight connects our commercial and industrial customers with energy savings opportunities,” said Rob Sandstrom, manager-customer excellence and electric operations, SWL&P. “These efforts are making our local businesses and community more sustainable.”

Russell Liupakka, energy analyst for Energy Insight, Inc., is the primary contact for businesses in SWL&P’s service area that are considering new construction or conservation improvements. He conducts facility assessments, identifies potential projects, analyzes costs and energy savings, and helps businesses secure available rebates and tax credits.

“I represent SWL&P and help the utility’s gas and electric customers get the right information for energy-efficiency projects,” Liupakka said. “A key aspect of my work is educating business owners and facility managers about Focus on Energy rebates and incentives that can help buy down the cost of energy improvements.”

Focus on Energy is a state energy conservation program. All investor-owned utilities in Wisconsin contribute to the program, and SWL&P customers pay for this through a charge on their monthly utility bills. Focus on Energy returns a portion of the money to eligible Wisconsin



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businesses for projects that manage energy use, promote economic development, and control the state's growing demand for electricity and natural gas. Energy Insight serves as a liaison to ensure SWL&P's commercial customers get a slice of the pie.

The new Hampton Inn in Superior is a good example. The project included interior and exterior LED lighting and energy-efficient heat pumps, water heaters, and cooling equipment. These choices qualified for more than \$13,000 in Focus on Energy rebates, secured with Energy Insight's help.

"As a representative of SWL&P, I was involved in the Hampton Inn project from the beginning, looking at the architect's blueprints and mechanical pages to see what kind of equipment was planned and if choices could qualify for Focus on Energy incentives," Liupakka said. "They got maximum incentives and will save energy in the long run because we were able to get in on the front end and make sure every lighting fixture and piece of equipment was high efficiency."

Focus on Energy recently presented the project's owner, Oliver Companies, with an Energy Efficiency Excellence Award for making energy efficiency a priority when building the hotel. Jim Toninato, president of construction for Oliver Companies, thanked Focus on Energy and the team at SWL&P.

"All of the emails and phone calls ... you were always there," Toninato said, acknowledging the team at SWL&P for its role in the project. "I can't always get the information on my own. I need your help."

Energy Insight's relationship with SWL&P dates back more than 25 years when company president Matt Haley was hired to provide the utility with the same services Liupakka delivers today. This longevity and commitment have earned Energy Insight and its people a great deal of trust in the community.

"It is all about relationships," said Liupakka, "I work with architects, engineers, HVAC and electrical contractors, city officials, inspectors, and I get calls from SWL&P customers all the time who are considering a project and want to know what I would recommend. It is nice when people reach out because they trust I can help them through their projects and processes."



Hampton Inn, Super One Foods, and Epicurean are among many SWL&P commercial customers that have made energy-efficient choices and accessed Focus on Energy incentives with help from Energy Insight, Inc.

Being an impartial, third-party consultant solidifies that trust.

"We're not selling any equipment, and we're not associated with any electrical or heating contractor," Liupakka said. "We just provide information that SWL&P customers can use to get the greatest energy efficiency out of their projects and make it easy for them to access resources."



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