

## PROFILE: CENTRAL MINNESOTA POWER COMMUNITY SERVICES (CMPCS) ENERGY EFFICIENCY IS A JOINT EFFORT



The Mountain Lake energy efficiency crusaders at Milk Specialties: Plant Manager Eric Olfert, Energy Insight Energy Engineer Margit Barot, Mountain Lake Electric Superintendent Ron Melson, and City Administrator Michael Schulte.

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Christina Pierson,  
Public Affairs Director  
CMPCS



The Milk Specialties whey processing plant in Mountain Lake, Minn., operates around the clock, producing around 800,000 pounds of dairy protein each week for use in sports nutrition and functional food applications. Production has surged in the past decade with growing global demand for dairy protein products. To succeed in this highly competitive field, Milk Specialties tightly manages costs, including electricity.

Since 2015, Energy Insight, Inc., has worked on behalf of Mountain Lake Municipal Utilities to help Milk Specialties and other commercial-industrial customers in the small Minnesota community save energy and lower electric utility costs. The relationship is saving Milk Specialties more than \$70,000 per year to date, and projects currently planned or underway could bring combined annual savings to more than \$125,000.

Mountain Lake is one of 12 utilities in Minnesota served by Central Municipal Power Community Services (CMPCS), a division of Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (CMMPA). CMPCS helps customers of the joint agency's member utilities make smart energy choices with programs that encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy. Energy Insight is the organization's primary commercial energy consultant and works with 11 utilities in the CMPCS network.

"It is an active relationship," said Amber Patten, administrative assistant, CMPCS. "Energy Insight works closely with our member utilities and customers that have energy efficiency or

rebate needs. It helps manage our conservation improvement program (CIP) and assists with reporting to keep us in compliance."

### SMALL TO MID-SIZED UTILITIES JOIN FORCES TO MEET EFFICIENCY GOALS

Under the Next Generation Energy Act of 2007, public power utilities that operate in Minnesota are required to develop CIP plans to achieve energy savings equal to 1.5% of their average annual retail sales. Activities and results must be filed with the Minnesota Department of Commerce each year to ensure energy savings are calculated accurately and that utility programs meet statutory requirements.

It takes time and energy to research emerging technologies, develop and deliver rebate programs, and comply with the State reporting mandates. Working through their joint power agency, CMPCS utilities pool resources, aggregate results, and achieve success. CMPCS partners with Energy Insight, which serves as a technical resource to members, and, with help from the Energy Insight staff, files CIP results with the State of Minnesota.

### ENERGY INSIGHT SHARES EXPERTISE ON MULTIPLE LEVELS

Energy Insight has experience developing and delivering effective CIP programs for utilities of all sizes, but its multidimensional role with CMPCS is unique.

"There are three different layers of customers," said Margit Barot, an energy engineer at Energy Insight, who serves as the primary point of contact. "We serve CMPCS in general, individual member utilities, and their end users, or meter holders, who ultimately receive the benefit of lower energy costs."

The relationship is structured so CMPCS pays Energy Insight to help member utilities design and deliver CIP services and rebates that yield results. Member utilities work with Energy Insight, offering their business customers free access to professional energy efficiency expertise and services. Energy Insight also verifies projects for the utilities, monitors and tracks energy savings, and manages all of the data needed for CMPCS to complete its joint annual filings. The organization consistently meets its CIP goals working with Energy Insight.

“We appreciate Energy Insight’s expertise in providing savings for our public power communities and helping us document how we are doing,” said Christina Pierson, public affairs director for CMPCS. “The paperwork is very time consuming. Energy Insight gives us quarterly reports to let us know if we are where we should be for the year.”

#### RELATIONSHIP STRENGTHENS UTILITY-CUSTOMER RELATIONS

In addition to saving time for CMPCS and member utility personnel, the relationship dramatically improves the quality of interactions between participating utilities and their customers. Energy Insight is ready to respond whenever commercial customers inquire about rebates or need energy efficiency consultation. Its services include commercial-industrial energy analyses, conservation project identification and management, project design assistance, energy- and cost-savings calculations, rebate application submissions, and more.

“Utilities pass on customer information to Energy Insight, then we give them a call, set up a site visit or walk-through, and share information about every rebate program and incentive the utility has to offer,” Barot said. “We spend anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours on site, depending on what stage of a project the customer is at and how much help they need. That level of attention makes customers want to come back and use utility rebates to do even more projects.”

“Providing access to Energy Insight with its certified professionals is a valuable service our utilities can provide to their customers,” Pierson said. “They really are experts in energy audits, lighting efficiencies, motors, and the latest technologies.”

#### ENERGY EFFICIENCY SUPPORTS ECONOMIC GROWTH

Milk Specialties is just one example that demonstrates how Energy Insight’s involvement strengthens utility-customer relationships and helps businesses save energy, lower costs, and improve their bottom lines. In this way, it serves as a powerful economic development tool.

“Energy Insight’s partnership with Mountain Lake Municipal Utilities produces real value for us. It is a huge time saver to have Energy Insight analyze efficiency opportunities, make recommendations, schedule the



Top: (l-r) CMPCS Administrative Assistant Amber Patten, Energy Insight Energy Engineer Margit Barot, and CMPCS Public Affairs Director Christina Pierson collaborate closely to deliver energy efficiency programs to CMPCS member utilities and their customers. Bottom photos: Margit Barot checks the new energy-efficient motors at Milk Specialties and discusses the results.

contractors to do the work, and process rebate applications,” said Eric Olfert, plant manager of Milk Specialties. “Our partnership helped make efficiency upgrades possible, and it makes us more competitive in the global protein market.”

“Energy Insight is a top notch organization, and we couldn’t be happier,” Pierson said. “Minnesota is so lucky to have this type of professional expertise working on behalf of public power utilities. They do a great job!”



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