

Experts lecture about economics of energy efficiency

By Kathryn Reed

Lights. That was the one thing the three panelists keep repeating – how paying attention to lighting can translate into thousands of dollars. Change the bulbs, turn them off, and start saving money.

David Mattocks, president of Green Pro Systems in Truckee, told the group gathered at Embassy Suites in South Lake Tahoe on Tuesday, to find out what they pay a year to energy companies, then multiply that by 0.3 and that is the savings, on average, that can come from tweaking energy consumption.



David Mattocks
talks Tuesday
about energy
efficiency.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Much of the discussion was targeted to business owners. But it was pointed out the second largest bill for a homeowner is often utilities, so the message was for individuals as well.

Peter Millar, energy project leader in the Business

Environmental Program at UNR; and Scott Terrell, with the Truckee Donner Public Utility District, joined Mattocks on the panel sponsored by the South Shore Green Business Cooperative.

One of the points was that even if someone does not buy into the environmental reasons to reduce energy consumption and carbon output, economics speak to nearly everyone.

Millar said every building has opportunities for cost-savings.

“You need to step back and evaluate the system and how you use the building. We look at each opportunity as a little business plan,” Millar said. “Look at the energy bills. It’s like taking the pulse of a patient.”

Because lighting can account for 40 percent of an energy bill the speakers spoke to this area being the first to tackle for any business.

Millar referenced a middle school in Carson City that put in sky lights and is using natural light when possible, and therefore can flip switches off.

He said the main post office in Reno put in new lights and productivity increased 13 percent. Studies have shown different types of lights affect how workers perform.

Half of a small retail outlet’s electric bill can be lighting. That is why putting in energy efficient bulbs makes a difference, as does reducing their use, using natural light or having sensors in bathrooms.

Terrell said it’s important to start with education and awareness before moving into the implementation stage. He recommends using professionals to assess a building’s energy efficiency because they’ll be looking at things the average person wouldn’t consider.

Mattocks showed a series of slides from infrared audits that highlighted blasts of cold air seeping in under doors and

electronics using juice when no one is working. The latter is phantom energy use – leaving something plugged into an outlet can use energy even when the machine isn't on. Fifteen percent of a home's energy use is phantom energy.

Energy Star appliances were also talked about. The three urged businesses that lease equipment to make sure the supplier provides Energy Star rated products.

Another thing Mattocks urged was getting employees on board to understand the importance of being efficient with energy use.

“The return on investment on solar and wind is decades. Don't go solar. Spend the money on an audit,” Mattocks said. “Energy efficiency will get us so much more, so much faster.”