

Power-saving blitz for business



Tori Sutton

Staff Reporter

Local businesses served by Festival Hydro could be eligible to receive up to \$1,000 worth of free energy-saving products and services through a new program.

The Power Savings Blitz is being offered to non-food service small businesses by Festival Hydro in partnership with the Ontario Power Authority.

The program is designed to help local businesses save money on electricity costs and support the province's conservation goals.

Festival Hydro conducted the first audit under the new program on Monday at the Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce.

"It's a win for the customer because there are monthly savings," said Bill Zehr, Festival Hydro president. "They will use less kilowatt hours and more importantly will pay lesser dollars on their monthly bill."

It also benefits the provincial power grid since most offices keep their lights on during daytime hours, when the grid is at its peak.

The blitz is focused on lighting system upgrades as older fluorescent tube lights usually found in stores are far less efficient than the lights of today, which can use about one-third less electricity.

Inefficient lighting was the biggest problem auditor Peter Furst found at the Chamber of Commerce.

The four-foot fluorescent light bulbs used throughout the office could be upgraded to newer models.

Even the light in the exit sign could be retrofitted to use three-watt LED bulbs instead of the 15 watt bulbs currently in use.

Though lighting is usually the biggest energy waster, Furst points out if a business has an electric water heater, it can benefit from a heater jacket. Pipes can be insulated and aerators placed on bathroom faucets.

Garry Lobsinger, Chamber of Commerce general manager, said no one needed to convince him to sign up for the blitz.

"If it's going to save us some money and do our part for the environment, why wouldn't we?" said Lobsinger. "It's a win-win for us."

Under the program, all eligible businesses will be offered a free energy audit to identify energy-efficient upgrade opportunities.

The first 80 qualifying businesses that agree to proceed with the upgrades will receive up to \$1,000 worth of energy-efficient improvements, free of charge.

Irene McInnes, Festival Hydro billing and collections manager, said if a business owner misses out on this round of energy audits they shouldn't worry – she expects the program will be rolled out again in 2009.

The audits are available to businesses in all areas served by Festival Hydro including Stratford, St. Marys, Seaforth, Dashwood, Brussels, Zurich and Hensall. The program is not available to restaurants.

For more information, or to sign up for the blitz, visit www.powersavingsblitz.ca.

PHOTO: Festival Hydro, in partnership with the Ontario Power Authority, is offering the Power Savings Blitz Program to local small businesses. Festival Hydro undertook the very first energy audit on Monday at the Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce. From left are Bill Zehr, Festival Hydro president, Peter Furst, Festival Hydro energy auditor, Garry Lobsinger, general manager Stratford and District Chamber of Commerce and Irene McInnes, Festival Hydro billing and collections manager. (Tori Sutton)

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