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Energy conservation key in light of increased costs

■ Campus officials are finding ways to save energy now that costs are through the roof

By Brooke Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

The University, like many other electricity consumers, has been paying higher bills than ever because of energy shortages in the West.

Such high costs have prompted the University to search for ways to conserve campus resources. In the last two months, campus personnel have been using a variety of methods to lower energy consumption at the Student Recreation and Fitness Center. But now, after the Eugene Water and Electric Board's decision Tuesday to raise Eugene electric rates by 5.4 percent, University energy and environmental specialists say everyone from students to professors need to do their part to conserve on campus.

George Hecht, director of campus operations, has been working with the rec center throughout the term to conserve energy consumption in the building. He said it costs about \$125,000 a year to provide energy for the center.

To lower these costs and conserve energy, they have lowered room temperatures and are also testing the use of fluorescent light bulbs and occupancy sensors. Hecht said the new bulbs and sensors will lower the building's energy use for lighting.

"Lights tend to stay on and no

one feels the need to turn them off," he said. "That's just a waste of energy."

Hecht said fluorescent lights do not use as much heat as other light bulbs, and occupancy sensors are programmed to turn lights on only when someone enters a room. He said although the sensors are expensive, he hopes they can be installed in all campus buildings in the future.

“If you know you're going to be away from your computer for half the day, then just turn it off. That's something every student and faculty member can do.”

George Hecht
director of campus operations

In addition to lighting, Hecht said people need to be aware of wasted energy when computers are left on. He said when he was first analyzing the use at the rec center, he walked into an empty lab with about 20 computers, and all of them were on.

"That is just an example of wasted energy that is costing the campus a lot of money," he said.

Nick Williams, the University environmental manager, said shutting down computers when they are not in use is just one way people can conserve energy on campus.

"If you know you're going to be away from your computer for half the day, then just turn it off," he said. "That's something every student and faculty member can do."

Williams said about 80 percent of the University's energy demands are for lighting, so it is important to take advantage of natural daylight whenever the weather is nice.

"People should alter their workstations to use the most of daylight," Williams said.

While there are many ways to conserve when the sun is out, the University is also taking measures to conserve energy at night.

Hecht said in addition to the conservation measures being taken inside the rec center, they have also begun to shut down the center's waterfall at night.

"We do not benefit in having that on at night, so that's a lot of savings right there without any costs," he said.

Alan Smith, business manager for facilities services, said campus conservation helps everyone in the long run, because it can lower University expenses. He said this year, the University's electricity bill is estimated to be about \$1.8 million, which is about 10 percent higher than past years. However, these numbers will increase because the next bill will include the EWEB rate increase.

"These are big numbers," Smith said. "But anyone here who conserves is saving money, and that will reflect on everyone's bill."

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