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Super Green: OPALCO's EnergySmart Program and Island Market

After three years of upgrades through OPALCO's Commercial Lighting and EnergySmart Programs, Island Market is now "one of the most energy efficient grocery stores in the Northwest," according to Mark Larson of Portland Energy Conservation, Inc. Larson is the Field Energy Analyst Manager for the EnergySmart Program. "Island Market is the leader that other NW grocers are now trying to follow." Larson and OPALCO Energy Services Coordinator Martha Warachowski have been working with the Market on a long list of energy efficient upgrades. Some improvements that you can see for yourselves—like the new and retrofitted reach-in freezer cases with LED lighting, and others—some of the biggest ticket items—are running behind the scenes: new efficient motors and controls on the compressor and night covers for the produce and meat cases.

Island Market Manager Jason Linnes has taken the lead on this project. "We're doing everything we can to be efficient and reduce our carbon footprint," says Linnes. "With the energy savings we're seeing—we're getting our money back on this investment pretty quickly." In 2006, the Market replaced its overhead lighting with a more efficient system of electronic ballasts and T8 lighting as a part of OPALCO's Commercial Lighting Program. In November of 2008, reflective and insulating night covers were installed on all of the produce, deli and meat cases. In January of 2009, a retrofit of the cases and walk-in refrigeration was completed and LED lighting was installed in most of the cases (very few grocery stores have the very efficient LED case lighting). The final touch was the replacement of an open freezer case with a super efficient reach-in freezer case in the back of the store. The new case has LED lighting, efficient motors and an anti-sweat heat controller in the doors to prevent fogging—so customers don't have to open the doors to find what they're looking for.

The EnergySmart program provides consultation, system design and a lot of freebies such as replacement gaskets, beverage merchandise controllers and cold-rated CFLs for walk-ins and freezer cases. OPALCO comes in with coordination of resources and big rebates—mostly from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Conservation Rate Credit program—once the project is complete. "All that Island Market has done," says Warachowski, "is a testament to the fact that Jason is so committed to energy efficiency."

Larson agreed and added that “OPALCO has a deeper saturation and involvement with the EnergySmart grocer program than other co-ops and utilities in the Northwest—and that’s a testament to OPALCO’s commitment to its members.” OPALCO has helped many of the grocery stores in the County with energy efficiency upgrades, including King’s Market, Marketplace, Lopez Village Market, Roche Harbor Resort, Homegrown Market, Blossom Organic Grocery, Islandale and Country Corner.

OPALCO member businesses of all sizes with electrical loads for lighting and/or refrigeration may be eligible for these program benefits and rebates. To learn more, contact Martha Warachowski, Energy Services Coordinator at 360-376-3571.

OPALCO is a member-owned cooperative electrical utility serving more than 14,000 accounts on 20 islands in San Juan County. OPALCO provides electricity that is 97% greenhouse-gas free and is predominately generated by hydro-electric plants. OPALCO was founded in 1937 to bring electricity to rural islanders and is one of 900 electric co-ops in the United States today.

Photos and Captions:

- 1) Night covers.jpg: “The produce staff love the new covers,” says Linnes. “They report a huge reduction in shrinkage—what you have to throw away due to spoilage.”
- 2) Larson and Linnes.jpg: “Mark Larson congratulates Jason Linnes on the completion of energy upgrades and Island Market’s leadership in energy efficiency.”

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