

# PowerGrant Profiles



## *Little Stores: Big Energy Savers*

The bright red and yellow Little Store logo is an icon in northeast Minnesota. It symbolizes 24-hour convenience to customers looking for gas and automotive supplies, hot coffee and snacks, groceries, or any number of small items. With 19 locations, it is one of the most successful family-owned convenience store chains in the Arrowhead Region. Its parent company, Cloquet-based Best Oil Company, serves an even broader area, providing wholesale gasoline and automotive products from the Canadian border to the Twin Cities and from the Iron Range into northwest Wisconsin.



*Best Oil Company's newest Little Store in Duluth's Lincoln Park neighborhood incorporates energy saving lighting and other technologies.*

leader in energy efficiency.

"We look for opportunities to incorporate energy saving technology whenever we remodel a property or build a new store," said Mike McKinney during a visit to one of the chain's newest stores in Lincoln Park.

Mike, John and Chris McKinney are third-generation co-owners of this family business, founded by their grandfather in 1939. Mike McKinney credits its success to three things—excellent communication between owners and employees; strong emphasis on keeping stores clean, well stocked and customer-friendly; and enthusiasm for innovation. The latter has made Best Oil Company a

Minnesota Power and its energy consultants from Matt Haley & Associates, Inc. have worked with Best Oil Company and its architects on several projects, calculating energy and cost savings for various technologies, including compact fluorescent lighting, air conditioning and display lighting in coolers and freezers. Based on the projections, Best Oil Company invested \$18,284 in Little Store improvements and has achieved \$3,695 in annual savings by participating in the PowerGrant incentive program, which results in a 23.7% return on investment.



*Little Stores' co-owner Mike McKinney discusses cost-saving measures with energy auditor Gary Olson of Matt Haley & Associates.*

"We go out and visit businesses, look at the energy-saving measures being proposed, gather technical data from the contractors, calculate the reduced demand and determine improvements that qualify for rebates," said Gary Olson, project manager with Matt Haley & Associates. "If we see that something doesn't make sense for a company, we'll tell them."

Minnesota Power offers commercial customers up to \$1,200 in free design or energy audit assistance to explore conservation measures. That is in addition to

### *PowerGrant Contact Information*

For more information, please call Minnesota Power's Conservation Improvement Program toll-free at 800-228-4966 ext. 2902.

## ***"Energizing Our Region" through Conservation Improvement***

Minnesota Power's Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) works with local leaders, businesses, community groups, other energy providers and government entities to help customers reap the economic and environmental benefits of sustainable energy savings. Minnesota Power and its partners accomplish this through research, education, evaluation and direct impact initiatives.

### ***Find out how you could get a PowerGrant***

Minnesota Power awards grants to commercial/industrial customers who use innovative technologies, improve manufacturing processes, undertake renewable electric energy projects, or who need project design assistance. PowerGrant awards are available for a wide variety of projects employing diverse technologies.

Here are some examples of activities or products that could qualify for MP funding under the PowerGrant Program:

- New electro-technologies that lower energy costs per unit of production in a manufacturing process
- Innovative technologies that are new and underutilized in our regional marketplace
- Inclusion of energy-efficient options in the design phase of a project

Maximum annual grants are determined by a customer's average billing demand:

<b><i>Customer Demand</i></b>	<b><i>Maximum Rebate</i></b>
0 to 100 kW	\$10,000
101 to 300 kW	\$25,000
Over 300 kW	\$50,000

Customers may submit multiple grant requests.

### ***Other MP Products and Services***

In addition to PowerGrants, MP CIP offers commercial and industrial customers other energy efficiency products and services. These include energy audits, rebates, dual fuel, storage/off-peak services, outdoor and area lighting and economic development assistance.



*High performance fluorescent lighting in coolers saves money and renders accurate colors for more appealing displays.*

## ***"There's nothing mysterious or esoteric about the savings. They're real."***

any PowerGrant rebates for which they might qualify. Many small business owners hesitate to invest in energy saving efforts because of the up-front costs. Minnesota Power's Conservation Improvement Program (MP CIP) is trying to change their perception.

"Business people don't always think about the impact of energy costs on their bottom line, but it can be dramatic," said Tim Gallagher, program manager for MP CIP. "The right energy moves can have a major return on investment through significant savings over time. Some of the best technologies aren't even new, auditors may just recommend changes in how they are being used."

"It is difficult for small businesses to keep up with rising costs—you can't open a newspaper without seeing articles about layoffs and mergers," McKinney said. "Energy efficiency is a rare opportunity to reduce costs without cutting employees or limiting services. Through the changes we've made, we're saving money, helping operations and being a good corporate citizen in terms of the environment. It's a win-win.

"Once you go through the energy audit and rebate process, the benefits become very clear," he added. "There's nothing mysterious or esoteric about the savings. They're real."