



Education event with tenants at Dellwood & Edgewood Apartments.



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DELLWOOD & EDGEWOOD APARTMENTS/CROSBY HRA AT HOME WITH ENERGY SAVINGS

Opportunity came knocking for owners and residents of two apartment buildings in Crosby, Minn., when a team of Minnesota Power energy efficiency experts and direct install technicians paid a visit in August 2022. Those who answered received valuable information and a host of free energy-saving products to help lower energy use and reduce utility costs for years to come.

The visit was part of an ongoing partnership between Minnesota Power's commercial energy conservation program and the Crosby Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Crosby HRA), which owns and operates Dellwood & Edgewood Apartments. It was a perfect example of how Minnesota Power's Multifamily Direct Installation Program helps facility managers and owners lower operating costs and increase property values through energy conservation upgrades, while lowering the costs of living and increasing the comfort of residents.

The free program provides a comprehensive approach to energy efficiency in multifamily buildings located in Minnesota Power's service territory. It includes an energy analysis and comprehensive report, education to tenants and building operators, immediate savings through direct installation of products and the potential for additional savings through enhanced incentives for completing recommended projects.

RESIDENTS ENERGIZED BY FREE PRODUCTS AND SAVINGS

The Crosby visit began on a warm summer morning with an educational event for tenants. As residents enjoyed coffee and donuts, Minnesota Power representatives talked about energy efficiency, answered questions and showed samples of LED lights, advanced power strips, refrigerator thermometers and other products that would be installed in apartments throughout the day—free of charge to residents who wanted them.



Energy analysis in mechanical room at Dellwood-Edgewood Apartments.

"The educational piece was very well received--way better than I anticipated," said John Schommer, rehab and maintenance director, Crosby HRA. "Residents loved it, and not just because they were going to get free products. The people who showed up were very enthusiastic."

"A lot of the tenants were already pretty knowledgeable; they asked great questions and were engaged in the conversation," said Emily Heiken, programs and services representative, Minnesota Power. "Involving residents from the start helps empower them to take energy savings into their own hands."

That meant saying, "Yes," when energy professionals from Minnesota Power and facilities personnel went door-to-door later that day, offering to install the free products.

"The tenants were great, very gracious and welcoming," Heiken said. "Even those who may have been hesitant at first were happy to have the upgrades at no cost to them and seemed to enjoy working with our team. We heard a lot of 'Thank you's' throughout the day!"

The teams installed free LED light bulbs, advanced power strips and refrigerator thermometers in units throughout both apartment buildings. Residents also received LED floor lamps because the building is income based and qualified for additional income-eligible incentives from Minnesota Power.

"A lot of the tenants don't have extra money to afford energy-saving measures like those that Minnesota Power provided free of charge," Schommer said. "It was helpful for them to understand how energy efficiency saves money, and they enjoyed receiving free products for their homes. It was a good way to make a difference for a lot of people who wouldn't otherwise have that option."



INCOME-QUALIFIED RESOURCES USED TO REPLACE INEFFICIENT REFRIGERATORS

Minnesota Power representatives also examined refrigerators to see if they qualified for free replacement through the Multifamily Program's income-qualified component.

"Minnesota Power put so much time and effort into identifying ways they could help," Schommer said. "They took pictures of every single ID tag in the refrigerators to document their ages and efficiency, really going above and beyond what you might expect. They identified dozens of refrigerators that qualified for replacement—the oldest one was 34 years old!"

"We replaced 42 refrigerators for that facility," Heiken said, noting that inefficient refrigerators older than 15 years old at income qualified facilities can be replaced through the program. "It will save the owners (Crosby HRA) money on replacing them and use less energy per month, plus we remove and recycle the old refrigerators."

COMMERCIAL ENERGY ANALYSIS IDENTIFIES FACILITY-WIDE SAVINGS OPPORTUNITIES

Installing free energy-saving products in apartment units is just part of the Multifamily Direct Installation Program. Energy professionals also toured common areas and mechanical rooms with apartment maintenance personnel. They installed energy-saving LED light bulbs, LED exit signs and vending misers—while conducting a comprehensive energy analysis to identify facility projects and equipment upgrades that would save Crosby HRA even more energy and money.

The data they gathered was used to create a detailed report with site-specific recommendations for conservation improvements. Minnesota Power offers enhanced incentives for building owners and operators that complete recommended projects within a specified period of time.

"We try to maintain the properties as best we can, and we have newer boilers and systems in place, but the analysis we got from Minnesota Power included some big numbers for potential savings," Schommer said. "The upgrades they identified can make a lot of difference, from lighting, refrigerators and laundry equipment to energy-efficient pumps and variable frequency drives."

Schommer was particularly interested in a new incentive that is allowing Crosby HRA to refresh lighting throughout the buildings.

"We recently started fluorescent lighting reimbursements—Crosby HRA was the first site," Heiken said. "In income-eligible facilities, owners can replace fluorescent fixtures with LEDs and we reimburse up to 100 percent of the cost. For market-rate multifamily facilities, the reimbursement is up to 50 percent of product cost."

"Minnesota Power offered to help with replacing over 300 light fixtures, upgrading them to LED," Schommer said. "That is huge. It helps everyone. We also are looking into new ENERGY STAR® laundry machines (which were recommended in the report)."

IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM SAVINGS ADD UP

Energy savings achieved at Edgewood and Dellwood apartments to date are significant. They include:

- 33,000 kWh in annual savings from direct installs
- Almost 58,000 kWh in annual savings from replacing 42 older refrigerators with ENERGY STAR® models and recycling the old units
- Around 69,000 kWh in annual savings from the lighting reimbursement project which converted 311 fixtures from fluorescent to LED.

Additional energy saving projects are being considered for 2023.

Similar results are being seen across Minnesota's service territory as the Multifamily Direct Install Program continues to grow. In 2021-2022, projects were completed at 25 facilities, resulting in energy savings of more than 600,000 kWh.

CUSTOMERS GIVE THE PROGRAM HIGH MARKS

Customer responses are equally impressive. A recent survey of participating facility owner/managers rated the program 4.5 on a scale of 1-5 with five being "very valuable." Every survey respondent said they found the program to be either "valuable" or "very valuable."

"I can't stress enough how easy Minnesota Power made this for us," Schommer said. "They do all the work, and (customers) get all of the benefits."

"It is important for our company as a whole to make sure we do whatever we can to help customers," said Crystal Pelkey, customer programs and services representative, Minnesota Power. "We are excited to tell this story so other multifamily facility managers, owners and maintenance personnel know that Minnesota Power is here to help them save energy and money—just like we did with Crosby HRA."

"Crosby HRA and the tenants and staff at Dellwood-Edgewood Apartments have been great partners," Heiken said. "The facility staff has been there every step of the way; from initial interest and providing staff to accompany us the day of the direct install to following up with report findings and additional opportunities. It has been a huge success!"