The Challenge: Improving the Energy Efficiency of Buildings Across the Nation

Energy Savers Blog

On the Energy Savers Blog, we talk a lot about what people can do at home to save money on their energy bills so they can use it on other things that enrich their lives. But businesses across the country are also taking steps to improve their energy efficiency—steps that reduce costs for American companies, saving millions of dollars and making the U.S. economy more competitive.

The Energy Department announced last week that six new major companies have joined the Better Buildings Challenge, which encourages leaders across the country to commit to reducing the energy use of their buildings by at least 20% by 2020. Under the Challenge, private sector CEOs, university presidents, and state and local leaders commit to taking aggressive steps to reduce the energy used in their facilities and sharing data and best practices with others around the country. Upon joining the Challenge, Starbucks Coffee Company, Staples, and The J.R. Simplot Company pledged to upgrade more than 50 million square feet of combined commercial building space, including 15 manufacturing facilities. That's more than 850 football fields of energy-efficient building space!

One of the keys to helping businesses make the cost-effective, energy-saving upgrades that will reduce their energy costs and make them more competitive is connecting them with financing to cover the initial costs of their investments. Financial allies Samas Capital and Greenwood Energy, which just threw their hats into the Better Buildings Challenge, will make $200 million in financing available for energy efficiency upgrades through this national leadership initiative. And utility partner Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), leading by example, has committed to offering expanded energy efficiency programs for its commercial customers, who are responsible for 30 million square feet of commercial building space.

The energy to operate the buildings where we work, shop, and study costs the U.S. approximately $200 billion annually. Last year, commercial and industrial buildings consumed more than 40% of all the energy used by the U.S. economy. The goal of the Better Buildings Challenge is to support building upgrades to make America's buildings 20% more energy efficient over the next decade, while also reducing energy costs for American businesses and local governments by more than $40 billion and creating jobs for U.S. workers.

Nearly 70 organizations have now joined the Challenge. Together, these organizations account for more than 1.7 billion square feet of building space, including more than 300 manufacturing plants, and have committed almost $2 billion to support energy efficiency improvements nationwide. For more information, visit the Better Buildings Challenge website [1].

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[1] http://www4.eere.energy.gov/challenge/