

A pioneer in a unique renewable energy partnership

“Healthcare” and “brewery” aren’t two words that typically go together. But, Gundersen Lutheran Health System based in La Crosse, Wis., has entered into a unique renewable energy partnership with a local brewing company, City Brewery. In January 2009, the two organizations broke ground on an innovative combined heat and power project that is expected to generate eight to 10 percent of the energy used on Gundersen Lutheran’s campuses in La Crosse and Onalaska, Wis.

The renewable energy project uses waste methane gas discharged from City Brewery’s waste treatment process and turns it into electricity. It is projected to generate three million kilowatt (kW) hours per year. That is equivalent to planting 951 acres of forest and removing 670 cars from the road and is enough electricity to power 280 homes.

Here’s how it works. The brewing process creates waste that must be pretreated by City Brewery before it is sent to the city’s waste water treatment facility. Biogas, including methane, is created during that pre-treatment process. Currently, City Brewery flares the gas to dispose of it. The heat and power project will allow the methane gas to be captured and sent through an engine Gundersen Lutheran is

installing at the City Brewery site. The engine generates electricity that is then transferred to the power grid. In addition, heat generated from the engine will be captured and recycled back to produce heat for the waste treatment process at City Brewery.

Eventually, Gundersen Lutheran plans to add a second engine at the site, bringing energy production to five million kW hours per year.

The combined heat and power project at City Brewery is just one piece of Gundersen Lutheran’s energy plan to lower costs and lead the healthcare industry in environmental stewardship. The health system’s goal is to become 100 percent energy independent by 2014. Gundersen Lutheran plans to reduce its energy consumption by 20 percent using low-cost or no-cost retrocommissioning efforts and offsetting the remaining energy needs with renewable energy.

Gundersen Lutheran Health System is headquartered in La Crosse, Wis., with hospitals and clinics in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. For more information on its renewable energy projects, call (608) 775-1400 or go to gundluth.org/green.



Gundersen Lutheran broke ground in January 2009 for a combined heat and power project with City Brewery in La Crosse, Wis. Initially, the renewable energy project is expected to generate three million kW hours per year by using waste methane gas discharged from the City Brewery waste treatment process and turning it into electricity. Once the project is complete, the two engines at the site are expected to generate five million kW hours a year.