

## Air handler zone scheduling leads to \$78,000 in energy cost savings

When Gundersen Lutheran Health System staff conducted an energy audit in early 2008, they discovered a no-cost solution to one of the organization's energy problems. The air handlers that blow warm or cool air through the buildings use a lot of energy, but they were often running during times when staff and patients weren't in a building or room. The solution—schedule the air handlers to run only when needed.

Air handler scheduling is similar to what a person would do to their home when they're getting ready to leave for vacation and set the thermostat so the temperature gets warmer or cooler than usual to save on cooling or heating costs.

To accomplish this retrocommissioning goal, health system staff measured the temperature in each zone of the building,

then calculated how long it takes for the zone to cool down or warm up to a set point. That way, the temperature is comfortable as staff begin arriving for their day, while saving as much energy as possible. The air handler is scheduled to shut off or slow down at the end of the day when staff and patients leave the building.

The health system completed zone air handler scheduling in three buildings in 2008. In those buildings alone, the zone scheduling led to a more than \$78,000 reduction in energy costs and saved more than 1.2 million kilowatt hours a year. Three more buildings in the health system are scheduled for zone scheduling in 2009.

No additional materials were needed to conduct air handler scheduling and paybacks were immediate for this no-cost retrocommissioning effort.

Retrocommissioning efforts, such as Gundersen Lutheran Health System's air handler zone scheduling, examine systems and no-cost or low-cost measures to improve efficiency and reduce energy demand. By the end of 2009, the health system expects air handler zone scheduling to reduce its energy costs by approximately \$130,000 annually.

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



At Gundersen Lutheran Health System, staff conducted zone air handler scheduling, allowing them to set the air handlers to run only when necessary. The effort in just three of its buildings led to a more than \$78,000 reduction in energy costs and saved more than 1.2 million kilowatt hours a year while maintaining comfort for patients and employees.