

Simple fix leads to energy savings

During an energy audit in 2008, Gundersen Lutheran Health System staff discovered many exhaust fans were running unnecessarily 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Gundersen Lutheran has several hundred exhaust fans of various uses and sizes—some as wide as a single stall garage door—so finding a way to run these fans only when needed became a priority.

Gundersen Lutheran started the process of retrocommissioning on eight exhaust fans in one of its outpatient clinics called the East Building. To reduce energy demand, Gundersen Lutheran modified the fans by reprogramming the building controls and “scheduling” them to turn off overnight and on the weekends when the facility is unoccupied.

Changing just those eight fans reduced electricity consumption at Gundersen Lutheran by more than 71,000 kilowatt (kW) hours a year and save the health system \$4,300 annually. In comparison, running a home exhaust

fan 24 hours a day would use about 500 kW hours and cost homeowners about \$50 a year. Similar changes are being made on fans across Gundersen Lutheran’s campus in La Crosse, Wis. If Gundersen Lutheran sees the same rate of savings for as few as 50 additional fans, the health system would see an additional \$25,000 in energy savings annually.

The exhaust fan changes at Gundersen Lutheran are part of the health system’s larger retrocommissioning efforts, which examine systems and implement low-cost or no-cost measures to improve efficiency and reduce energy demand. Through its retrocommissioning efforts, Gundersen Lutheran saw a 10 percent decrease in energy consumption in 2008 and expects to see a 20 percent decrease or more by the end of 2009.

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.



Gundersen Lutheran has several hundred exhaust fans of various uses and sizes on its campuses. Gundersen Lutheran’s Jeff Rich, executive director, Efficiency Improvement; Corey Zarecki, efficiency improvement leader; and John Schleifer, supervisor, Facility Operations, are part of the retrocommissioning process to schedule the fans to run only when needed and reduce energy consumption.