

News Release



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Contacts:

Denis Bergeron, MPUC, (207) 287-1366

Linda Frechette, Public Relations Director, (207) 846-3714

Maine Businesses and Customers Can Benefit from Efficiency Maine

*Graves Lighting Upgrade Lowers Electricity Costs
and 'Brightens' the Shopping Experience*

Presque Isle, ME, June 2006 -- In a local economy where larger chain stores can have a direct impact on smaller businesses, finding ways to reduce costs can make a difference - and every penny counts.

At Graves Shop and Save Supermarket in Presque Isle, energy manager Mike Wallace pays the electric bills and knew the store could be more efficient with its energy use. As a certified energy manager, he had worked with the Maine Public Utility Commission's Efficiency Maine Business Program on several projects at other Graves stores in previous years, and knew the program and its benefits well.

Wallace convinced the storeowner to spend \$36,000 to replace several hundred older overhead lights on the retail floor with more efficient 'T8' fluorescent lighting -- which improves the quality of light at a lower wattage. The project had been under consideration for some time, but an Efficiency Maine cash incentive of \$5,835 reduced the expenditure, making it easier to get management approval.

The project was expected to pay for itself in about 13 months, but after about 9 months, Wallace estimated that the store had already saved \$38,650 on the cost of electricity -- and recouped the money it spent on the lighting upgrades.

"We reduced our electricity usage by nearly 19% in the first nine months," explains Wallace, "which from an energy standpoint is great news for any business. Our electricity costs dropped by about \$3,300 a month which is a significant reduction."

But beyond dollars and cents, the lighting upgrades have resulted in a more pleasant atmosphere. Shadows from the older lights have been virtually eliminated, making the merchandise look better.

"We're still getting positive feedback from customers who are finding the whole store so much brighter. The new lighting has made for a better shopping experience," says Wallace.

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The Efficiency Maine Business program also offers a network of ‘program allies’ – local or regional companies who work with interested businesses to forecast energy savings and assist with program application and approvals. Graves worked with Horizon Solutions of Bangor as a supplier and Underwood Electric of Presque Isle on the electrical work. “It helps to work with a program ally who’s done an Efficiency Maine installation before,” says Wallace, “because they can help with pre-approval and ensure successful implementation.”

Wallace encourages businesses of all sizes to contact Efficiency Maine to explore energy upgrades and improvements for which they might qualify. In his opinion, the cash incentives are the biggest attraction, because they mean a quicker payback.

“As a locally-owned business, we have to remain competitive in any way we can,” said Wallace. “Our energy savings is going to have a positive impact on our bottom line. If you have the capital to make this kind of investment, you’ll reap the benefits for years to come.”

Efficiency Maine is a statewide effort to promote the more efficient use of electricity, to help Maine residents and businesses reduce energy costs, and improve Maine’s environment. Efficiency Maine is funded by electricity consumers and administered by the Maine Public Utilities Commission. Information about the program and types of electricity-saving devices is available online at www.energymaine.com or by calling toll-free, 1-866-376-2463.

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