

Jamaica Challenged By High Energy Costs

With the continued devaluation of the Jamaican dollar and the less-than-optimistic forecast for the economy, Jamaica continues to be challenged by high and growing energy costs; especially for electricity.

According to energy reports, Jamaica is an inefficient user of electricity; with Jamaica Public Service (JPS) annual sales to commercial costumers growing 40 per cent to more than US\$700 million, and with the Office of Utilities Regulation projecting a continued increase in costs, even after the commissioning of the new power plant (projected for late 2015).

Steven Marston, managing director of Conditionedair and Associated Contractors (CAC 2000 Limited) and an engineer, said that air-conditioning unit usage accounts for 50 to 60 per cent of commercial consumption or some US\$350 - \$420 million per annum. Appropriate high-efficiency systems can reduce electricity consumption by 40-60 per cent and thus reduce total electricity consumption by 20-36 per cent.

What can businesses do to save this expenditure?

Start with an energy-efficient/energy-saving air-conditioning system, with the correct engineering design, carefully selected models and controls supported by proper installation and maintenance.

Improvements to your building envelope should also be made to areas such as roof and insulation, fenestration and ventilation and infiltration; leading to less heat gains and reduced cooling, hence lower energy use.

Energy efficiency can also be achieved by using fluorescent and LED lights, which can reduce energy consumption by 50-75 per cent.

The use of controls, including timers, occupancy and day-lighting sensors.

The installation of variable-frequency drives on pumps and fans will not only reduce electricity consumption but will also protect the motors from

brown-outs. Replacing existing appliances and computers with EnergyStar-rated equipment will reduce plug loads.

Alternative Energy Solutions

Energy conservation is a great investment opportunity and typically offers US\$ paybacks of one to five years. Once the building is made energy-efficient, investments in alternative energy options such as solar photovoltaics and wind, that further reduce electricity consumption while making businesses more independent, can now be made.

CAC 2000 Ltd has positioned itself as the leading air conditioning and energy solutions provider and works with carefully selected partners to offer energy audits, alternative energy, lighting, insulation and financing solutions to businesses and homeowners. The company recently signed an exclusive distributorship in Jamaica with Mitsubishi Electric, United States of America.

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