

Sweetwater Union High School District

2013 ENERGY CHAMPION - K-12



"In these tough economic times, our district facilities staff has worked closely with SDG&E to come up with a strong plan for reducing our energy use. These improvements have the direct result of making more funds available to support educating our kids."

TOM CALHOUN,
CHIEF FACILITIES EXECUTIVE,
SWEETWATER UNION
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

As one of its numerous energy-saving measures, desktop management software was installed on PCs across the entire Sweetwater Union High School District to automatically power down computers that hadn't been used in some time.

Annual Savings: 3,377,728 kWh; 2,153 therms
SDG&E® Incentives: \$608,615

Highlights

- Energy-efficient HVAC systems
- Lighting retrofit and occupancy sensors
- Desktop management software on 4,000 PCs
- 3.3 MW of photovoltaics installed with 6.8 MW planned

Earning high marks in energy efficiency

For Sweetwater Union High School District, every dollar saved through energy efficiency is another dollar available to invest in the classroom. Economic realities have reduced the district's general fund by a third over the past five years, so any operational improvements that relieve budget strain are critical. This is why the district has made a strong commitment to sustainability and energy efficiency. Through a variety of SDG&E® programs, Sweetwater has updated major equipment systems and implemented renewable energy sources, which have resulted in significant savings. Notes Tom Calhoun, Chief Facilities Executive for Sweetwater Union High School District, "The less we pay for energy, the more we can do for our students." With this powerful motivation, the district has set the aggressive goal of reducing the cost of its energy bills by 25%. It also has plans to

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About Sweetwater Union High School District

With over 41,000 students in grades 7-12, Sweetwater Union High School District is the 16th largest school district in California and the largest high school district in the nation. The district operates 29 school sites in the cities of Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City, and the San Diego communities of Bonita, Eastlake, Otay Mesa, San Ysidro and South San Diego. Across its campuses and in all educational efforts, Sweetwater is dedicated to the bold promise of 100% student success.

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transition approximately one third of the district to photovoltaic power. Adds Manny Rubio, Director of Grants and Communications for Sweetwater Union High School District, "This is not just a project or two. This is an overall cultural change in the district. It's just how we work now."

Upgrades earn an A in energy efficiency

During 2012, the Sweetwater Union High School District updated both HVAC and lighting systems to set the stage for ongoing energy savings. Through the SDG&E Savings by Design (SBD) program, the district upgraded aging HVAC equipment to more efficient models. In addition to reducing energy usage, this migration also lowers the district's ongoing maintenance costs as a result of newer, simpler, and more cost-effective equipment. The district was also able to take advantage of the SDG&E Direct Install (DI) program to update classroom lighting at many school sites. In addition to switching to more efficient bulbs, occupancy sensors were also added to automatically turn lights off when classrooms are empty. The district received \$608,615 in incentives from SDG&E and additional savings were enabled through the California High Performing Schools program.

To continue this energy saving success, Sweetwater has already begun investigating LED lighting and implementation of photosensors. With this capability, lights can be automatically dimmed when sufficient outside light is available. These improvements also lay the groundwork for increased energy efficiency in the \$500 million worth of new construction in coming years.

Savings add up with ongoing programs

Beyond lighting and HVAC, the district's facilities team has found other ways to encourage energy efficiency. With its implementation of desktop management software on 4,000 PCs, the team was able to combat energy waste by

automatically powering down computers that were on, but not in use. Sweetwater also participates in SDG&E's Critical Peak Pricing (CPP) program at a number of school sites and its district offices, which has led to a savings of 10% on its electric bill.

Reading, writing, and renewable energy

Renewable energy is a key focus of the district's energy-efficiency efforts. During 2012, Sweetwater installed 3.3 MW at 6 sites, with plans for 17 more sites and a total of 6.8 MW. The arrays installed in school parking lots provide multi-layered benefits including reduced electric use, lower energy costs, and shade for staff and student cars. These six photovoltaic installations currently cover 10% of the district's total peak load, with plans to increase this to a third. This will result in a net savings of \$7.9 million to the district. Notes Program Manager of Sweetwater Union High School District Karl Bradley, "The solar panels have been very big successes. We hear positive feedback from staff, and in some sites they have been able to generate up to 80% of the site's electrical usage."

Sweetwater's efforts have resulted in 3,377,728 kWh and 2,153 therms saved annually. "For a school district, Sweetwater is very cutting edge. They have a plan and are following through to advance energy efficiency," comments Robert Maderazo, SDG&E Senior Account Executive for the Sweetwater District. The most exciting result of this is the direct impact these energy-efficiency efforts will have on students. For Sweetwater, the math is simple: more energy savings equals more money available for education.

For more information

To learn which SDG&E program is right for your business, contact your SDG&E Account Executive, call the Energy Savings Center at: **1-800-644-6133** or email businessenergysavings@sdge.com.

These programs are funded by California utility customers and administered by SDG&E® under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission. Rebates and incentives are provided on a first-come, first-served basis until program funds are no longer available.

P.O. Box 129831 | San Diego, CA 92112-9831 | Connect at sdge.com

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