

UNH recently hosted a training session aimed at helping college and university facility managers achieve energy reduction goals.

The New Hampshire College and University Compliance Assistance Cooperative (NHC3UA) sponsored the free training on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager software. Portfolio Manager is a free online program that helps facility managers establish benchmarks for a building's energy and water consumption.

Conducted by Kudret Utebay of The Cadmus Group, Inc., the hands-on training covered how to open an online account and enter specific institutional data into the Portfolio Manager. At the end of the day, each participating institution had benchmarked at least one building or set of buildings.

Matt O'Keefe, UNH Campus Energy Manager, was present to share the university's experience with the ongoing Energy Star Project. Participants were also provided information from the EPA, N.H. Department of Environmental Services (DES), SyAM Software, and National Grid.

Institutions throughout the nation spend an exorbitant amount of money a year to power their campuses. This cost will only continue to rise, as will the negative impacts of increased energy use on the regional and global environment. Recognizing this twofold dilemma, UNH has made reducing energy use and the associated costs a priority, particularly energy from non-renewable sources.

According to Kathleen Brockett, Education/Outreach Supervisor at the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, "Colleges and universities have a major role to play in addressing global warming by reducing energy consumption in all their buildings and throughout their transportation systems, and by communicating the benefits of these efforts to students, faculty, and school officials."

With these goals in mind, hosting an ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager training workshop was a natural step for the NHC3UA. The Cooperative is a partnership between the Offices of Environmental Health & Safety at UNH and Dartmouth College, formed to "assist other educational institutions in New Hampshire with their health and safety programs by providing information, resources and assistance whenever possible."

NHC3UA has strongly encouraged well written planning, safety and training procedures, resource conservation including recycling and other waste reduction practices, and reductions in the quantity and toxicity of hazardous material use and storage. All of these recommendations are intended to improve the quality of health and safety, and to control and even reduce costs associated with regulatory compliance.

"The requirements set forth by governmental regulations are essential to protecting our environment," said David Gillum, Assistant Director of UNH-OEHS. "In addition, when presented with practical solutions, environmental health and safety programs should consider expanding their duties beyond regulatory compliance. The NHC3UA holds a unique position to bring college and university heads, governmental agencies, and industry consultants together."

One practical solution to reducing energy consumption and costs is through the use of ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager. With established benchmarks in place, institutions can track on-campus energy use and greenhouse gas emissions; identify actions that may reduce energy consumption resulting in significant cost savings; and monitor improvements in performance over time.

“With energy prices and climate issues at the forefront of how our University operates, it is imperative to stress the efficiency of how our buildings perform,” said Matt O’Keefe. “UNH has benefited from the data available through metering its buildings, enabling us to identify where we can improve. The more information you have, the better off you will be when making decisions on how to improve.”

The ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager is intended to be one of the first steps in the process of effectively reducing energy use and costs. Moving forward, colleges and universities will need to analyze their options and take the necessary steps that will not only save money in the long-run, but ultimately protect the environment for future generations.