

JBLM energy monitors save power, taxpayer dollars

By Cathy Hamilton-Wissmer, Joint Base Lewis-McChord Directorate of Public Works October 8, 2019



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Major Brian Smith, left, 110th Chemical Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade, and Sakhawat Amin, Joint Base Lewis-McChord's Directorate of Public Works energy program coordinator, discuss energy conservation efforts inside the 110th Chemical Battalion's building recently.

(Photo Credit: Cathy HamiltonWissmer, JBLM Directorate of Public Works)

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JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. -- In 2018, Joint Base Lewis-McChord spent \$20 million on electricity -- an amount worth considering as the base observes Energy Awareness Month in October.

During the last several years, the Department of the Army and Department of Defense have developed energy conservation programs aimed at improving the energy efficiency of buildings on military installations, but retrofits and better design are only part of the answer. Energy efficiency through education, awareness and involvement is key to a successful energy management program.

Sakhawat Amin, energy program coordinator with JBLM's Directorate of Public Works, hosts the monthly Building Energy Monitor class in DPW's Environmental Services building. Typically, more than 10 participants from various JBLM organizations take the class every month.

"Has anyone done any environmental training before?" Amin said to a recent class, followed by most of the class shaking their heads no.

Everyone has their part to play in conserving energy. The JBLM DPW Environmental Division teaches a wide variety of classes to encourage environmental awareness.

The Building Energy Monitor class is driven by Army Regulation 420-1, Chapter 22, Section III, and requires JBLM to establish an energy awareness program. It is applicable to all facilities, which includes the appointment and training of energy monitors for each building.

An effective Building Energy Monitor program can reduce energy usage up to 6% per year -- a savings of about \$1.14 million at JBLM, according to Amin.

Major Brian Smith, operations officer for the 110th Chemical Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade, previously served as the 7th Infantry Division chemical officer and was the division environmental compliance officer there. He took the Building Energy Monitor training class in 2018. Although there was a standing environmental compliance procedure and energy conservation program at 7th Inf. Div., the concept wasn't fully developed, Smith said.

Significant steps were taken to improve the division's environmental compliance program as senior-leader emphasis drove the message home that all units needed to take ownership of their environmental programs to ensure long-term gains were sustained.

"There is a trickle-down effect in behavior that affects energy conservation when senior management has buy in," Smith said.

The effort was successful primarily due to the high level of command emphasis placed on it by the 7th Inf. Div. leaders. Smith said their direction and encouragement guided all brigades within the division to implement and maintain energy programs down to the battalion level.

JBLM is required to achieve and maintain 30% reduction in energy use intensity relative to fiscal 2003 and demonstrate continued progress for each fiscal year thereafter, per Executive Order 13834.

"Anytime there is a population increase, there is a bump in energy usage," Amin said. "There are 3,000 buildings on JBLM, and a quarter of those buildings are 20,000 square feet and above. The question remains: how do we continue to reduce energy consumption going forward? It's about changing behavior, upgrading old boilers, replacing parking lot lights with LED lighting and updating policies."

Building energy monitors are trained to do an annual energy audit and report back to DPW. They're encouraged to reach out to the DPW service order desk for supplies and fix all doors and window with weather stripping.

"Energy conservation is a key action that an individual can take," Amin said.

To register for the monthly Building Energy Monitor training or learn more about the program, call 253-966-9011. Upcoming classes are Oct. 22, Nov. 12 from 10 to 11 a.m., in Building 1210 Mann Ave, on Lewis Main.

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