

ENERGY TECHNOLOGY

No-Cost Measures Slash University's Energy Costs

By KATHLEEN CROTTY

RICHARDSON, Texas.—In response to the state's fiscal crisis, a program of low-cost and no-cost conservation measures have reduced energy costs at the University of Texas here \$188,505 in five months, according to E.C. Bogard, the campus' physical plant director.

A recent examination of utility bills indicates that from May 1, 1986 to Oct. 1, energy-saving measures consisting mostly of a comprehensive employee

awareness program have saved an average of \$37,700 a month. Total equipment expenditure for the low-cost conservation effort was estimated at only about \$100, Bogard said.

Compared to the same five months in 1985, the total energy saved from May to October was 2,689,389 kilowatt hours of electricity and 4,151 thousand cubic feet (mcf) of natural gas. The university's largest monthly savings came in August 1986, when it consumed 1,540,130 kwh of electricity and 1,338 mcf of

natural gas—which is 518,285 kwh less than used in August 1985 and 4,065 mcf less natural gas—for a total monthly savings of \$64,421, he said.

The no-cost actions implemented include reducing the number of hours of air conditioning in certain buildings, Bogard said. For example, temperature thermostats in the campus' 35 permanent and approximately 25 temporary buildings, covering a total of 1,063,500 square feet, were previously controlled at the will

of whoever turned the dial. Thermostats are now lock-set, by key, at 76 degrees in the summer and 67 degrees in the winter, he noted.

Most thermostats had existing locking covers that were not being used; in some cases, locking covers were purchased at a local hardware store, Bogard said.

Another method of reducing air conditioning involved consolidating weekend events into those buildings that were operating during the weekend anyway.

On the heating side, domestic hot water, which had been heated to between 115 and 120 degrees F., is now kept at a steady 105 degrees, according to Bogard. Also, use of portable space heaters has been banned on campus, he noted.

Bogard said that the no-cost and low-cost measures are part of a statewide effort to cut operating costs for public buildings. As a result of the current depression in the U.S. oil industry, the State of Texas is facing

a multibillion-dollar tax shortfall this fiscal year, and the University of Texas system has had its budget cut by 13 percent to help reduce this impending deficit. Reducing energy costs is seen as one way to avoid cutting instructional funding, he explained.

Bogard said that the university's president has mandated that faculty and staff turn lights off in any office left unoccupied for more than 15 minutes, close drapes or blinds during the summer, and keep window coverings open during the day in cold weather to take advantage of solar gain.

Bogard believes the school has only scratched the surface of possible energy savings. Future possibilities include the gradual replacement of the incandescent lighting with fluorescents. Because of state revenue shortfalls that directly affect university funding, this will not be a budgeted item, but will be funded out of whatever remains from each building's monthly budget allocation for operations and maintenance.

