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Metering Program makes progress at Fort Knox

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HUNTSVILLE, Ala. -- You can't save energy if you don't know where it's being wasted.

Thanks to newly installed energy meters, Fort Knox, Ky. is finding out just how much energy they're using and exploring ways to conserve as they come online with the Army Metering Program.

"A total of 341 electric meters and 182 gas meters were installed or retrofitted," said Robert Dyrdek, Energy Team member from Fort Knox Department of Public Works. "These meters effectively monitor a total of 235 buildings, or 76 percent of our non-housing occupied space."

The meters are all connected through Fort Knox's building automation system. This system not only collects energy data, but also monitors temperature, heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) unit status, and turns off units during unoccupied periods, Dyrdek said.

Each building is connected by wireless or fiber communications to an isolated network throughout the post. All of this data is collected and stored to allow for trending and reporting, said Jason Volz, a Harshaw Trane engineer, also an Energy Team member at the Department Of Public Works.

By comparing average energy use and having 15-minute monitoring increments, we will get to a point where we can spot where improvements are needed and which buildings are performing poorly, Volz said.

When a home energy consumer gets their monthly electric bill, they're reminded about the cost differences between peak and off-peak rates. Since Fort Knox and other installations bill their tenants for energy use, getting data about periods of peak energy demand should allow for energy savings and ways to show a customer how energy costs can be reduced, Volz said.

Located near Louisville, Ky., Fort Knox is home to the U.S. Army's Armor Center, Human Resource Command, Recruiting Command and numerous other facilities. In total, Fort Knox encompasses 11 million square feet of conditioned space across more than 109,000 acres, according to the Department of Public Works.

Fort Knox isn't the only installation where the Army Metering Program is being deployed to help identify energy savings.

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Eventually the energy data collected from military installations around the world will be fed into a Defense Department system that provides a strategic view of energy consumption, said Jefferey Murrell, meter execution project manager at the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center in Huntsville, Ala., where the Metering Program is managed for the Army.

“The Army garrisons in Alaska will have installed more than 4,000 advanced energy meters by the end of June,” Murrell said. “Huntsville Center will award meter task orders at Army garrisons in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Japan and Korea this fiscal year.”

The Center also is preparing and awarding metering projects for new clients like the U.S. Marine Corps, the Defense Logistics Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Logistics Agency and U.S. Air Force bases, Murrell said.

Defense Department tenants are getting meters as a result of policy and guidelines issued after the Energy Policy Act was signed into law in 2005 by former President George W. Bush. In 2009, President Barack Obama signed an executive order, “Federal Leadership in Environment, Energy and Economic Performance,” making reductions of greenhouse gas emissions a government priority and requiring agencies to develop sustainability plans focused on cost-effective projects and programs.

“Installing advanced meters on buildings to measure utility consumption is the forerunner, or the Paul Revere, to exciting renewable energy infrastructures, building controls, smart grid technology, primary master meters and efficient building mechanical systems, which will eventually reduce energy costs and consumptions,” Murrell said.

Like Revere, who is credited for developing an early intelligence and warning system during the American Revolution, the Metering Program will be used to keep watch on our energy consumption and warn utility managers when problems arise.

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