



Ameren Illinois ramping up energy efficiency spending

BY JEFFREY TOMICH • jtomich@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8320 | Posted: Wednesday, June 22, 2011 12:00 am

Ameren Illinois is sharply increasing energy efficiency incentives as the utility tries to help reduce energy use to comply with a four-year-old state law.

The company will offer about \$78 million in discounts and rebates for energy saving lighting and appliances to its 1.2 million electric customers and 800,000 gas customers. That's more than twice as much as the utility spent each of the first three years of the efficiency program.

Illinois' energy efficiency standard, approved in 2007, requires Ameren and ComEd to cut energy use 25 percent from 2007 levels by 2025.

This year, Ameren must reduce energy use 0.8 percent, which represents more than 309,000 megawatt-hours and 2.4 million therms of gas.

The savings target gradually increases to 2 percent in 2015 and subsequent years.

Funding comes from Ameren customers and is capped at 2 percent of the utility's 2007 revenue. All of the incentives available are tested for cost effectiveness to ensure money is well spent, said Rob Kelter, senior attorney for the Chicago-based Environmental Law and Policy Center.

Instead of buying power, consumer are buying efficiency, Kelter said.

The ELPC and Citizens Utility Board — groups frequently at odds with Ameren over rates and environmental issues — held news conferences in Peoria and Champaign on Tuesday to help promote the Ameren efficiency programs.

"We feel like Ameren has done a good job running these programs," Kelter said.

"But we felt it would be a little bit different message coming from the consumer and environmental groups."

Interest in Ameren's efficiency programs has been strong each of the previous three years, and the utility has met its energy savings targets each year, he said.

Available incentives include:

- Discounted compact fluorescent light bulbs. ELPC and CUB estimate that each CFL bulb can save consumers \$7 a year, or \$40 over the life of the bulb.
- Rebates of up to \$600 for new central air conditioning units, or \$35 for room air conditioners.
- Ameren will pay Illinois customers \$50 to pick up and recycle a second refrigerator or freezer.
- Rebates of \$25 on programmable Energy Star thermostats, which can save homeowners an average of \$100 a year on electricity costs.