

Installations Practice Energy Conservation

By Lisa Daniel
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 22, 2010 – The Defense Department is well on its way to reducing its energy consumption on military bases by 34 percent by 2020, a department official said.

Joe Sikes, the department's director for installation facilities and energy, said in an April 15 interview with the Pentagon Channel that the department is on track to meet its goal, even though officials expect the demand for power on bases to rise as troops redeploy from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Energy use will get higher on installations as more troops come home," Sikes said.

The department spends \$3.8 billion annually to power more than 500 military installations, amounting to about 28 percent of the department's energy costs, he said.

The military needs to reduce its energy use to become less reliant on what the Defense Science Board called in a 2008 report a "fragile and vulnerable" commercial power grid that places critical defense missions "at unacceptable risk of extended outage."

"We're doing a lot of it already, and we think we can get there," Sikes said.

Pew Charitable Trusts, a Washington-based research group, recognized some of the installation achievements April 20 when it released a report that found the department a leader in the environmental movement. Among other things, Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif. -- the service's largest land holding -- is being powered solely by geothermal sources and has produced enough energy to provide for the surrounding community, and the Air Force Academy also is taking alternative measures to be off the public electric grid by 2012.

But alternatives energies are not enough, Sikes said, noting that installations also have to use less energy. Officials hope to reduce energy consumption on bases by 3 percent each year, and Sikes admitted it won't be easy.

"The cultural change [toward conservation] is as big a thing here as anything," he said.
"Everybody has to be on board for us to go in this direction."

The department meters about 63 percent of 300,000-plus buildings now, but plans to do all by 2012, Sikes said. And, as part of its comprehensive energy plan, officials plan to create a data management system to track how much energy is being used where and watch for trends, he said.

"All we can do now is figure out how much we are paying," Sikes said. "We don't know who the bad users are on base. Right now, there's no way to know if one ship is doing better than another on energy efficiency. You can't control what you can't know. People will perform better when they know what they're looking at."

The department also is following conservation policies in construction that make new

buildings 30 percent more efficient than older ones, Sikes said. Defense Department buildings must be deemed “lead silver,” which is the second-highest category for sustainable buildings, he said. And by 2015, all new buildings must generate the same amount of energy they use, he said.

To get there, the department’s buildings are likely to include changes such as plants on rooftops and heat pumps underground. “That’s where we’re headed in the future,” Sikes said.

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