

## State Energy Office Overview: Minnesota

The MN Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources ensures that Minnesota homes and businesses receive access to energy services that are reliable, reasonably-priced, efficient and economically and environmentally sound. The Division does this by advocating on behalf of the public interest in regulated-utility matters; providing financial heating assistance and energy conservation improvements for income-qualified homeowners; assisting viable new energy technologies seeking to enter the commercial market; and by providing education and technical assistance to residents, government agencies, and business on methods, including financing, for using energy wisely.

Within the Energy Division are four units:

- Energy Rates & Planning
- Energy Facility Permitting
- Energy Assistance Program
- State Energy Office



### Energy Rates & Planning

The main role of the Energy Rates & Planning area of the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources is to represent the public interest in proceedings before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

### Energy Facility Permitting

The Energy Facility Permitting area of the Division of Energy Resources conducts the environmental review required for proposed energy facilities in Minnesota and serves as technical staff to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

### Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) helps pay home heating costs and furnace repairs for income-qualified households. EAP is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

### Minnesota State Energy Office

- a. The primary goal of Minnesota's energy program is to accelerate market acceptance of high-efficiency and renewable energy technologies and practices. To do so we: Provide Minnesotans with high quality, unbiased, accurate information they can use in making choices that affect their energy use; Provide targeted financial and technical assistance to advance the implementation of conservation and energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies; and Educate Minnesota's construction industry and Minnesota consumers about best practices in building efficient, safe and durable buildings.

Within the MN State Energy Office are three programmatic teams: the Conservation Improvement Program, the Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program, and the State Energy Program.

### Conservation Improvement Program (CIP)

The Next Generation Energy Act of 2007 established energy-saving goals, through the Conservation Improvement Program (CIP), for electric and gas utilities that operate in the state of Minnesota. CIP oversees the \$200M CIP programs for over 180 electric and natural gas utilities to ensure that ratepayer dollars are used effectively and energy savings are reported as accurately as possible.

### Weatherization Assistance Program

The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) enables income-qualified households to permanently reduce their energy bills by helping to make their homes more energy efficient while protecting the health and safety of family members.

### State Energy Program

The State Energy Office is also home to the State Energy Program which provides education, technical and financial assistance to the residential, commercial, industrial, and government sectors in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

### MN State Energy Program 2012-2013 Priorities

### Energy Financing Programs

- **Public Sector Financing:** Technical, contractual and financial assistance to state agencies, local government units, school districts, and institutions of higher learning that elect to implement energy improvements with the goal of reducing aggregate energy consumption by 20% throughout all state agencies.
- **Private Sector:** Multi-year in-depth planning and development process to establish a large-scale clean energy-financing program for the private sector.
- **Minnesota Business First Stop:** Multi-agency project helping emerging businesses successfully site or expand in Minnesota by providing technical assistance and easy to access online information.

### Energy Efficiency & Building Technologies

- **State and local facilities:** Assist local governments in benchmarking and monitoring building energy usage.
- **Better Buildings Challenge:** Work in partnership with USDOE to meet Minnesota's Better Buildings Challenge.
- **Technical assistance:** Provide technical assistance to building owners and operators. Work with project managers of 230+ ARRA-funded public building efficiency projects to identify sites with significant gains in efficiency and assist those without significant gains to achieve anticipated savings.
- **Code Compliance:** Continue to assess Minnesota's building stock to ensure its buildings are in compliance with Sec . 410 of the Recovery Act; analyzing effectiveness and providing technical assistance to ensure savings.

### Information, Training, & Education

The objective of the Energy Information team is to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies through the dissemination of unbiased, accurate energy-related information through various media through the following 2012-13 priorities:

- **Consumer Education:** Provide technical assistance and general consumer information through Energy Information Center; Build knowledge and awareness of third-party certified, site assessors and energy auditors
- **Workforce Development & Market Transformation** - Participate in cross-sector collaborations supporting the ongoing development of a qualified workforce;
- **K16 Statewide Energy Education:** develop infrastructure for energy workforce pipeline (K16)
- **Energy Literacy** - Through a multi-agency collaboration, coordinate Green Homes Exhibit at the MN State Fair, reaching approximately 300,000 residents with accurate and timely messaging: [www.ecoexperience.org](http://www.ecoexperience.org).
- **Energy Assurance** - Revise MN Energy Assurance plan; conduct multi-agency disaster drill

### Clean Energy & Renewable Technologies

The MN State Energy Office provides information and resources for those seeking to purchase or install clean energy systems, with subject matter experts providing technical assistance, program development, and stakeholder facilitation regarding clean technologies such as solar, wind, bioenergy, and heat pumps. 2012-13 priorities include:

- **Distributed Generation:** Continue effort to increase distributed generation, gathering stakeholder and subject matter input on issues related to the advancement of distributed generation resources.
- **REPI:** Administer the ongoing Renewable Energy Production Incentive program.
- **EV+PV:** Serve on the Governor's Fleet Council that works to promote the use of biofuels and electric vehicles .
- **Technical Assistance:** Provide technical assistance to consumers, businesses, and policy makers on renewable energy resources, policies and technologies
- **DOE Sunshot:** Work with stakeholders to meet MN's **Solar Challenge** goals to provide best practices to local governments to facilitate solar deployment through streamlined permitting, implementation of zoning requirements and sound solar access as well as interconnection process improvements.

**MN Department of Commerce**  
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