

AGMA

IN FULL SUPPORT OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY INITIATIVE

Jack McGuinn, Senior Editor



Our politicians in Washington continue dithering over the Obama administration energy bill aimed at developing alternative, green sources of energy production. As a result, when this country will have a viable energy program in place is anyone's guess, given the usual D.C. gridlock. And yet, Americans can take more than cold comfort in the fact that at least some government agencies—U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)—and the private sector—some major manufacturers—are doing more than their share of work in trying to harness our existing, fossil-based energy sources in such a way that they are used to their best efficiencies.

Momentum for this effort began building last November with the announcement by Energy Secretary Steven Chu that his department was awarding “more than \$155 million in funding,” under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, for 41 industrial energy efficiency projects across the country. The funds will be directed toward industrial combined heat and power systems, district energy systems and grants to support technical and financial assistance to local industry.

And while none of the above applies to gear manufacturing, per se, the American Gear Manufacturers Association (AGMA) is wasting no time in getting with the government program, officially known as the Energy Efficiency Initiative Project (EEIP).

Implementing the project for AGMA is Amir Aboutaleb, AGMA staff engineer.

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“AGMA held exploratory meetings with various AGMA members who are major suppliers of complete drive systems and who work closely with end users,” he says. “Encouraged by these discussions, we convened a general meeting and, again, found very positive responses from members. This is clearly an area ripe for industry action. And, as noted above, companies that supply full systems and that work with end users (rather than sell to other suppliers) are the core of this initiative.”

Credited with spearheading the AGMA buy-in is Dave Ballard, current AGMA chairman and corporate manager of engineering and marketing for SEW Eurodrive.

Another governmental group, the U.S. Council for Energy-Efficient Manufacturing, states as its goal “to achieve global leadership in energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions reduction.” The council is supported by such corporate giants as 3M, Dow Chemical, Ford Motor Company, PPG and other major players.

While AGMA’s ambitions may not be as far reaching, it is certainly jumping into the fray with both feet. As the saying goes, it’s better to have a seat at the table than it is to be on the menu.

“Most of the Department of Energy’s work has been at a more aggregated level,” says Aboutaleb, “developing certification programs, supporting the development of the anticipated ISO

50001 Energy Efficiency Management Standard, etc. AGMA’s role through the formation of the new committee on energy efficiency will be to work on tools and guidelines to assist component makers and users become more aware of their energy usage and also help them identify ways of improving their efficiencies. At this point, we think that it is unlikely that DOE would take up gearing and mechanical power systems as a major focus. AGMA clearly will.”

As for any of you naysayers still remaining out there, Aboutaleb stresses the need for such a program.

“The vast majority of AGMA’s programs come from our members,” he says. “This program is the most recent example. Companies who question new approaches have a responsibility to their stakeholders to question it, to examine it and to ask how this affects (their customers). But, we know this is an important issue because of the support we have from a broad base of members.

“Energy efficiency is an increasingly important issue, and we can either embrace it by actively taking part and doing our share, or we can wait until it is regulated and we are forced to comply with it.”

The AGMA EEIP next committee meeting will take place via web-ex on March 5. (For info: aboutaleb@agma.org or www.agma.org.)

The strategic goals of the AGMA energy efficiency initiative, as stated

by the aforementioned energy-efficient council last June, are ones that any manufacturing sector will acknowledge as central to the energy performance and efficiency:

- Foster an organizational culture of continuous improvement in energy efficiency;
- Develop a transparent system to validate energy intensity improvements and management practices;
- Create a verified record of energy source fuel savings and carbon emission reductions with potential market value that could be widely recognized both nationally and internationally.

Inherent in these goals is the development of ISO and ANSI standards, including those addressing energy management, system assessment and measurement and verification protocol.

Given its import, Aboutaleb foresees the EEIP initiative having a role of sorts at the next Gear Expo.

“This is an important business issue, both from a position of good stewardship of resources and from a cost saving process,” he says. “Suppliers will likely discuss their capabilities as part of their exhibit at the show, and there are a few papers on energy efficiency related issues submitted for this year’s Fall Technical Meeting (2010 FTM).”

No one doubts that the road to energy efficiency and, ultimately, independence, will be a long, hard slog.

To that end, Aboutaleb was asked to state the benefits for AGMA members who embrace the energy initiative.

“In short, it will help members and others in the industry better meet the needs of their customers. In doing so they will improve their bottom line, remain competitive and save existing jobs, if not create new ones.” 

For more information:

AGMA
www.agma.org
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U.S. Council for
Energy-Efficient Manufacturing
www.superiorenergyperformance.net

