

COMPANY IS NOT JUST “WINGING IT” WITH ENERGY EFFICIENCY



Buffalo Wild Wings Grill & Bar specializes in turning up the heat with signature sauces that range from *smilin'* to *screamin' hot*. However, the company takes a more temperate approach when it comes to heating, cooling and powering its facilities, continually looking for ways to save energy and lower costs.

The recent construction of a new Buffalo Wild Wings restaurant in Duluth is a good example. Despite the energy-intensive nature of food service businesses, the facility was designed to use electricity as efficiently as possible.

Located near the Miller Hill Mall in Duluth, Minn., in a building that once housed Gander Mountain, the new restaurant is an example of environmentally responsible adaptive reuse of an existing facility and infrastructure. It also incorporates a variety of energy-saving equipment and systems. One of the most innovative features is its lighting system, which includes mixed energy-efficient bulbs and fixtures, plus a computerized

control system that automatically adjusts lighting levels throughout the day and shuts them off when the facility is closed.

“All of the lighting is tied together and programmed for maximum efficiency and ease of operation,” said Doug Robison of Energy Management Solutions (EMS), an energy consultant for Minnesota Power. “The system makes sure unnecessary lights are off, reduces energy usage, and increases the life expectancy of the equipment.”

Minnesota Power energy consultants contacted the Buffalo Wild Wings corporate headquarters when they first heard the chain was expanding to Duluth. They reviewed original blueprints and made recommendations for more energy-efficient lighting and lighting control systems, ENERGY STAR® appliances, and high-performance HVAC units.

“Our goal was to use Minnesota Power’s PowerGrant program to its full ability to optimize their energy savings and rebates,” Robison said.

The final plans included a high performance HVAC system with NEMA premium motors and economizers and ENERGY STAR® qualified coolers, dishwashers, and ovens. Even the wall-to-wall television sets that broadcast sports programming throughout the restaurant are ENERGY STAR® rated.

Together, these energy-saving choices are expected to save the company 152,000 kWh per year, reduce monthly electric demand by 26 kW, and avoid nearly \$10,000 in energy costs per year. They qualified for nearly \$7,000 in PowerGrant rebates from Minnesota Power.



“The rebates are a big bonus,” Jonas said. “If Buffalo Wild Wings opens 10 stores and gets similar rebates to what we received, it is like equipping an entire store for free.”

That math is important for the rapidly expanding company. Based in Minneapolis, Minn., Buffalo Wild Wings is among the top 10 fastest growing restaurant chains in the country. It currently boasts 638 stores and strives to reach 1,000 in the next few years. Some of the energy-saving technologies incorporated into the Duluth store will be carried forth as the company adds locations.

In addition to the bottom line benefits, energy efficiency is a good fit with Buffalo Wild Wings’ commitment to practicing good citizenship and helping to make communities better places to live, work and grow.

“We want to give back to our communities,” Jonas said. “It feels great to know we are using energy responsibly and doing our part for the environment.”

“Every penny counts in today’s economy. To stay competitive, we have to look closely at energy costs and do what we can to save money.”

Chris Jonas, General Manager, Buffalo Wild Wings, Duluth