

Business & Money

Rio Rancho firm operates the 'smartest building'

Jack McGowan believes the greatest way to ensure more energy is available to Americans is for them to be more energy-efficient.

And McGowan, president of Energy Control Inc., practices what he preaches.

Earlier this year, the high-tech Rio Rancho firm, just an empty lot away from Albuquerque's city limits, received the national Buildy Award for operating the "smartest building in North America."

"Our focus is to use technology to improve the use of energy and create a better environment," said McGowan, who has been a resident of New Mexico since 1975. He holds a master's degree from the University of New Mexico in public administration with an energy management concentration.

And that is what Energy Control does — it uses technology to help businesses save energy and money.

With a stroke of a computer button, the firm's technicians can control the temperature of any building they monitor, such as the sprawling Albuquerque Academy campus, a dozen miles across town.

Spare Change



HARRY MOSKOS
Of the Journal

"The system is Internet enabled, which means a building is available for management and communication through the Internet anytime, anywhere," McGowan said.

With an image of the Academy's campus on a computer screen, numbers reflect the temperature of each building. The temperature can be adjusted upward or downward by a computer click.

Cameras also provide security with a loudspeaker system activated by an Energy Control technician that can alert a trespasser that his movements have been observed and that police are on the way.

Energy Control's other clients include the New Mexico Military Institute, New Mexico State University, UNM, Heart Hospital of New Mexico, Public Service Company of New

Mexico, and public school systems in Alamogordo, Deming, Portales and Santa Fe.

"We're a system integrator. As technology has developed, we use energy efficiency to allow us to save energy when equipment is not needed," he explained. "We can electronically respond to a problem in a building without sending a person out there. We are managing more efficiently."

McGowan estimates that Albuquerque Academy saves some \$42,000 a year in overtime costs by avoiding the need to send out service personnel after hours when something can be fixed via the computer link through the Internet.

In addition, he said, the Academy saves about \$200,000 a year on utility bills because the new technology allows it to save energy when equipment is not being used.

McGOWAN:
"we're a
system
integrator"



Don Chalmer's Ford is another business making use of Energy Control's services.



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Using technology to improve the use of energy and create a better environment

Not only are all sales transactions recorded, but all vehicles taken in for servicing are monitored to record the condition of vehicles entering and leaving the premises.

“We’re saving Don Chalmer’s a lot of money on body work claims. We take out the human factor. The computers do it all,” McGowan said.

He also says the building that houses Energy Control’s own operations in 40 percent less expensive to run than the average office building in Albuquerque.

“Integration is our main business,” he said. “The technology makes use of computer-based systems for control of heating, air conditioning, lighting, fire alarms, electronic access to doors, security, video surveillance and other building systems.”

McGowan demonstrated — as seen on television police dramas — how Energy Control is able to focus on and read the license plate number of a vehicle in the

company’s parking lot.

Energy Control has storage capacity for systems that is at 3 terabytes, which equals 3,000 gigabytes.

Energy Control, which will observe its 30th anniversary next year, has 40 employees. In addition to the Buidly Award, the company has received numerous awards for its application of technology.

The New Mexico Association of Commerce and Industry last month awarded Energy Control its VIVA Award for the northwestern quadrant of the state.

“The award is for our vision, investment, vitality and action,” McGowan said.

SDM magazine, a trade publication, for the second year in a row has presented Energy Control one of its Top 100 awards for implementing the best computer integration systems in North America.

The company also received one of the 2004 New Mexico Technology Flying 40 Awards. This is the second year the

company has received the award, which is presented annually to the fastest growing technology firms in the state.

Last year, the company received the Green Zia Pollution Prevention Partnership Award for its ongoing participation in the state’s environmental energy efficiency program.

McGowan also has a national role in the energy picture.

He was recently named to the Gridwise Architecture Board, which will advise the U.S. Department of Energy.

The 13-member board, formed through a group of DOE/industry experts, will be coordinated by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Richland, Wash., which is researching ways to improve the nation’s electrical transmission reliability.

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