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NEWS

Minnesota Power Honored for Mercury Reduction Efforts

07-13-04

(Duluth, Minnesota) — Minnesota Power's efforts to combat mercury pollution have been recognized with an international environmental award.

The company has been named winner in the Industry and Business category of the Lake Superior Binational Program's environmental stewardship awards program. It tied for the honor with Pinehurst Inn at Pikes Creek, Bayfield, Wis.

The Lake Superior Binational Program is a partnership of American and Canadian government agencies, First Nations/Tribes and citizen stakeholders working to protect and restore the natural environment of the Lake Superior Basin. Its U.S. branch is coordinated out of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, Ashland, Wis.

The group praised Minnesota Power for having attacked the mercury emissions issue "from both the production and consumption side." It noted the full-scale mercury emissions control technology testing at Laskin Energy Center, Hoyt Lakes, Minn., and the company's design and construction of a model energy-saving house, the Millennium Star, in Duluth that consumes minimal electricity and thus reduces the demand for fossil fuel-fired generation.

Minnesota Power has been a national leader in the search for ways to reduce mercury emissions for more than 10 years. In the early 1990s, Minnesota Power volunteered to be one of eight sites around the country for a comprehensive assessment of emissions, including mercury, by the U.S. Department of Energy. The survey would become the industry benchmark.

In the late 1990s, Minnesota Power actively participated in the Minnesota Mercury Reduction Initiative, culminating in a voluntary agreement with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to work toward reducing mercury emissions and also mercury use in the workplace, where it can be found in electronics and instrumentation. As part of that effort, by the year 2000 Minnesota Power had reduced its mercury emissions by 15 percent to 20 percent compared to 1990 levels, becoming the only utility in Minnesota to be recognized by the MPCA for achieving a quantifiable reduction.

The Laskin research is part of an Electrical Power Research Institute study, but Minnesota Power is also testing promising technologies at other of its generating stations.

The Millennium Star, completed in late 1999, was designed for maximum energy efficiency, built with materials and techniques intended to achieve that. It has an annual heating bill of less than \$300. Until it was sold late in 2003, tours of the house were offered to show how a housing space can be both livable and energy-efficient.



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