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As July is heating up, so is the national debate on energy and how we're going to be using and paying for it in the future. I've asked myself why I feel compelled to wander into this minefield and risk being accused of politicizing our magazine. That's not my intent; I'm just making observations—*and continuing to gently pester you about one of the most critical issues of our times.*

Again, no matter what side of the debate you come down on, the one thing you can count on is that our lives will be changing dramatically. Some type of energy bill will be coming out of Washington. It won't be perfect—*no legislation ever is*. While just about everyone recognizes the need for an effective energy policy, few can agree on what constitutes "effective." Nobody will be completely happy with the final bill.

New regs will sting everybody to some degree. Get used to the idea. We all will be paying more for energy than we have in the past. And, yes, it definitely could cost more to do business in the future—*that is if an operation insists on doing business as it always has*.

There is a bright side, though. That's one of the messages the *Maintenance Technology* team heard at the recent Energy Summit 09 in Grand Rapids, MI. No area of the U.S. grasps the concept that "business as usual won't fly" better than Michigan. Interestingly, while industry up there has taken some real hits, its willingness to innovate, coupled with the spirit of its workforce is keeping it standing! We saw it for ourselves.

Almost 300 attendees from a range of operations crowded into the Summit (at about $150 per ticket) to learn why energy efficiency is so crucial to their state's economic recovery—*and how their organizations can begin to grow and even profit despite tougher energy legislation*. They also wanted to understand the various incentives offered by utilities, governmental entities and others to help them deal with current and proposed regulations, and to view and compare state-of-the-art solutions for reducing their operations' energy consumption. They discovered much more.

Some of the best "good news" came from energy expert Peter Garforth. He said that as new legislation kicks in, everyone—*including your customers and/or end-using consumers everywhere* —will require more and more energy-efficient "stuff" in their lives. Savvy companies will be rolling out more of the types of products and services this growing market has already begun demanding. (For example, companies that once made fiberglass boats are now among the largest manufacturers of wind turbine components in the world. At the consumer level, who among us isn't already using energy-saving light bulbs, opting for Energy-Star appliances and hoping to buy a new American-made, fuel-efficient vehicle in the very near future?) Furthermore, as Neal Elliott of the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy explained in his keynote, if we begin looking on energy efficiency as a valuable resource, among other things, we can help stablize energy markets and actually drive down energy prices.

More Energy Summits will be showing up around the country. I hope you'll join us when we come to a venue near you. As a capacity assurance professional, you play a key role in the building of a strong, vibrant, energy-efficient economy—*something that will pay off for all of us!* Stay tuned and in touch!
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