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AHFC delivers big energy savings with new building monitoring system

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA, Sept. 22, 2015 – Alaska Housing Finance Corporation recently unveiled a new building monitoring system that tracks real-time energy use in a building — a valuable tool in a state with some of the highest energy costs in the country. The system that AHFC developed is designed to save energy, along with building owners’ and managers’ time and money.

“This technology was developed as a way to responsibly manage the properties we own and in our role to provide public housing to vulnerable Alaskans. Very quickly, we saw the potential for huge energy and money savings across our state, and since the system is free of charge and open source, we invite others to use and further develop our investment,” said Bryan Butcher, AHFC CEO/executive director.

The building monitoring system, or BMS, can track a wide range of data including building occupancy, temperature, electricity and fuel use, as well as information from multiple sources, including established weather stations, building automation systems and databases. With the help of sensors that relay up-to-the-minute information, building systems can be monitored for proper operation, shutdown during unoccupied periods, aid in design considerations and help troubleshoot operational difficulties.

The BMS has already proved an invaluable resource for AHFC that owns and manages buildings spread over a large geographic area and in varying climates. It allows for real-time monitoring of information from inside its Anchorage headquarters or a remote facility hundreds of miles away. The application to its own facilities across Alaska led to a realization of the systems’ potential beyond its own needs.

Local organizations, such as Alaska Energy Authority, are enthusiastic about the software, already implementing the technology in their own workspaces.

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“Alaska Energy Authority is a strong supporter of AHFC’s mission and a partner on energy efficiency efforts across the state,” said Sara Fisher-Goad, AEA executive director. “The ability to monitor energy usage is a large step in realizing energy savings. In fact, AEA is using the software on our own building in an effort to reduce our operating costs.”

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium also jumped onboard with the technology early, and has been using the BMS to monitor its water-sewer treatment plants in 20 rural communities. The ability to view operations of a remote facility is valuable because it can alert users to building problems, such as excessive energy use or dropping temperatures to prevent a frozen water pipe. Avoiding one freeze-up could save hundreds of thousands of dollars, and avert a major inconvenience.

AHFC has been a leader in home energy efficiency since the state’s initial multi-million dollar investment in 2008, and the software extends the role of corporation who administers public housing in 16 communities. Using federal funds, AHFC developed the software and is now making the software open source and available at no cost at <https://code.ahfc.us/energy/bmon>, an online project host- and code-sharing website.

“We are excited to release this tool to the public as it aims to encourage energy efficiency, consistent with AHFC’s mission to encourage safe, quality and affordable housing for Alaskans,” Butcher said.

Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) is a public corporation with a long history of providing Alaskans access to safe, quality and affordable housing through home financing programs, energy efficiency and weatherization programs, public housing and more. Since 1986, AHFC has contributed \$1.9 billion to the State of Alaska's General Fund.

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