



## Small Changes, Big Payback

### Blue Earth County installs motion sensors to save energy and money



We try to save money where we can, especially since we're talking about taxpayer money. If I can keep the buildings running as smoothly as possible, it makes my job easier, too."

Tim Edwards,  
Blue Earth County physical plant director

#### Bad habits

Sometimes small changes can make a big difference.

Just ask Tim Edwards, Blue Earth County's physical plant director, who is always looking for ways to use less energy in the two buildings he oversees.

After 22 years with the county, and 12 of those as plant director, he knows how to improve the energy efficiency in both the historical Blue Earth County Courthouse and the Government Center.

In fact, his work on increasing energy efficiency in both buildings helped them receive the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ENERGY STAR® certification for several years running. Measures implemented included installing a building automation system, air handlers and high-efficiency lighting.

Edwards knew more could be done. He noticed that people were leaving lights on in both buildings just about every night.

"People would leave for the day but think someone else is still in the office so they leave the lights on," said Edwards. "We knew that a simple solution like installing motion sensors to shut off the lights would eliminate that problem."

Edwards applied for funding and connected with his Xcel Energy representative to learn more about rebate eligibility to help offset the costs of the new equipment.

"Tim had implemented some energy efficiency measures before so he was no stranger to efficiency work," said Marcus Hendrickson, Xcel Energy account manager. "Learning the rebate amount was all he needed to hear to move forward. Getting money back is a great motivator to complete a project."



**New sensors, fewer worries**

Edwards had 180 sensors controlling 578 lights installed in the Courthouse and 96 sensors controlling 608 lights installed in the Government Center. While he was at it, he decided to install another 26 sensors at the Blue Earth County Library for a total of 302 sensors in three buildings.

Now the lights in offices, hallways, restrooms and copy areas turn off after short periods with no activity.

Adding sensors was well worth the time and investment. An Xcel Energy rebate of \$13,350 combined with a Department of Commerce grant of \$22,000, saved them almost 70 percent of the total cost.

The project is estimated to reduce the average number of hours that lights are on in the two buildings — from 12 hours per day to 10. They expect to save more than \$5,000 per year in energy costs, and the project will pay for itself in energy savings in just over seven years.

“We try to save money where we can, especially since we’re talking about taxpayer money,” said Edwards. “If I can keep the buildings running as smoothly as possible, it makes my job easier, too.”

As a bonus, Edwards says the staff loves being able to walk out the door without worrying about shutting off the lights.

Project snapshot	
Customer	Blue Earth County: Courthouse, Government Center and library
Project	Installed 302 motion sensors in three buildings
Cost	\$51,600
Xcel Energy rebate	\$13,350
Grant funding	\$22,000
Cost after funding/rebate	\$16,250
Estimated energy savings	\$5,000/year
Payback	3.3 years

For more information about our rebate programs, contact your account manager or an energy efficiency specialist at **855.839.8862**. Visit [xcelenergy.com/LightingEfficiency](http://xcelenergy.com/LightingEfficiency).