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Jan. 20, 2012

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**Energy Efficiency Leaders Explore New Opportunities at  
10th Annual Midwest Energy Solutions Conference in Chicago**

**CHICAGO** – Nearly 500 energy experts gathered in Chicago last week to discuss the new landscape of the efficiency industry at the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance’s (MEEA) 10th annual Midwest Energy Solutions Conference.

The largest event of its kind in the region, MEEA’s conference brings together a broad range of private- and public-sector thought leaders from across the country. Since its start in 2002, the conference has continued to grow, and this year broke all previous records for attendance as well as number of exhibitors.

“The Midwest Energy Solutions conference continues to expand, as awareness and investment in energy efficiency increase among the region’s consumers, businesses, manufacturers and service providers,” said Jay Wrobel, MEEA executive director. “From industry-leading utility programs to innovative projects that capture international attention, the Midwest is quickly becoming a proving ground for energy efficiency products and services.”

The three-day conference kicked off on Wednesday, Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> at the Fairmont Hotel in Chicago with a keynote address by **U.S. Department of Energy Deputy Assistant Secretary Dr. Kathleen Hogan**.

Highlights from this year’s conference included:

- **The Outlook for Energy Efficiency Policy:** The opening session featured discussion on the impact of increasing state mandates for efficiency savings, decreasing funding for state energy offices and dwindling American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funds. The debate also included the impact of the current stagnant economy and new political leadership in the Midwest.
- **Claiming Savings from Behavior Change:** The discussion – which featured a standing-room-only crowd – focused on the latest developments in utility behavioral change programs, such as “Groupon-style” email updates and reward points that consumers can redeem with local merchants. According to the panel, residential customers want to know “what’s in it for them,” while commercial customers want to know how energy efficiency programs will affect their bottom lines.
- **The Utility Business Case for Energy Efficiency:** Panelist Val Jensen of ComEd suggested utilities think of energy efficiency as an integral part of their new business models, one that’s just as important as more traditional operations like power generation. The panel also highlighted the importance of energy efficiency programs to industrial customers, who need to cut energy costs as they compete with foreign manufacturers.
- **More Savings from HVAC:** Speakers examined the permanent effects ARRA funding will likely have on the industry, from expanding the skill base of contractors to making commercial and residential energy efficiency retrofits a viable business.

- **Emerging Technologies and Programs:** The discussion highlighted the need for consumer electronics manufacturers to be more cognizant of the energy their products use. According to panelist Dylan Sullivan of the National Resources Defense Council, in many cases the difference between “on” and “standby” settings on televisions, video game consoles and other electronics can be as little as 1 Watt.
  
- **The 2012 Inspiring Efficiency Awards:** This was the 8<sup>th</sup> annual awards ceremony, which feted industry leaders who have delivered innovative advancements in energy efficiency. Winning projects ranged from Minnesota’s Energy Innovation Corridor – a clean energy and transportation proving ground located along an 11-mile route between St. Paul and Minneapolis – to an Interactive Learning Lab in Davenport, Iowa that uses fun, hands-on displays to engage students and adults to promote smart energy use.
  - **2012 Inspiring Efficiency Award Winners are:**
    - **ComEd – Chairman’s Award**
    - **Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives – Impact Award**
    - **Ohio Hospital Association – Innovation Award**
    - **Energy Innovation Corridor - Xcel Energy – Innovation Award**
    - **Jennifer Easler, Iowa Office of the Consumer Advocate – Leadership Award**
    - **Advanced Technology Environmental & Energy Center – Education Award**
    - **AEP Ohio – Marketing Award**
    - **DTE Energy – Marketing Award**
  
- **The Overcoming the Financial Hurdle:** Speakers from Citi, Green Choice Bank, Harcourt Brown Energy & Finance and the Electric and Gas Industries Association explored how the private sector is taking a new and innovative role in identifying ways to finance energy efficiency improvements for businesses and homeowners in the absence of ARRA funding.

More information about the *Midwest Energy Solutions Conference* and the *2012 Inspiring Efficiency Awards* can be found at [www.meeaconference.org](http://www.meeaconference.org).

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### **About Midwest Energy Solutions Conference**

The Midwest Energy Solutions Conference is the largest event of its kind in the region. Each year it brings together a broad range of private- and public-sector thought leaders from around the nation who share a vested interest in energy efficiency.

The conference is presented by the **Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA)**, the region’s source on energy efficiency. Formed in 2000, MEEA is committed to advancing sound energy efficiency programs, policies and priorities in the Midwest. MEEA’s membership represents a broad consortium of energy stakeholders from across a 13-state area.

Now in its 10th year, the conference continues to grow as energy efficiency investment increases in states across the Midwest. Responding to attendees, the conference has expanded to include a formal expo to provide more opportunities to highlight and promote energy efficiency programs, products and companies.