

Hawaii Energy Program Spotlights Smart Grids, Electric Cars

November 13, 2014



Smart-grid technologies and electric vehicles are among the areas being targeted in an informational outreach by Hawaii Energy, the energy conservation and efficiency program controlled by the state Public Utilities Commission.

The additional energy efficiency efforts will be incorporated in Hawaii Energy's 2014 program year, which runs from July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2015.

"This year (the PUC has) asked us to do a few things we haven't done," said Joe Simpkins, director of technical services at Hawaii Energy. "Hawaii Energy's expanded program initiatives are representative of the PUC's commitment to the development and testing of energy-efficiency strategies that will enhance the integration of renewable energy on the electric grid."

The energy efficiency program, operated by Seattle-based Leidos Engineering LLC, will introduce a "charge-at-work" EV pilot program and smart technologies that will help residents efficiently manage electricity use.

In September, Hawaiian Electric Co. completed the initial installation of smart-grid technology by installing 5,200 smart meters for customers living in select neighborhoods on Oahu.

Smart meters give residents data broken down by day, time of day and even by 15-minute increments, to understand and manage electricity use.

The energy efficiency program is also looking into smart power strips, which do not need a smart grid in order to work. These devices look similar to typical power strips but have the ability to automatically disconnect power to certain appliances that are not in use.

Hawaii Energy will work with HECO and other companies to support energy storage, provide technical support for the Hawaii Building Code Council's codes and standards as well as integrate demand response capabilities.

Demand response is a program in which customers grant the utility limited control to temporarily reduce electrical loads in their homes or businesses, such as air conditioners and water heaters, in exchange for lower-priced electricity or cash incentives.

HECO offers one demand response program for residents on Oahu called "Energy Scout," which provides 34,000 customers a credit on their electric bills to allow the utility to turn off their hot water heaters for brief periods when electric demand is high.

Hawaii Energy is working with the utility on demand response devices. Some of the considered devices the efficiency program is looking to test are smart thermostats to be used with air conditioner replacements and smart water heater controls as well as a demand response component to Hawaii Energy's existing solar water heating incentives.

"Managed demand response, EVs, energy storage and other smart-grid capabilities are key to accelerating the use of clean renewable energy on our grid and reducing energy costs," Simpkins said.

©2014 The Honolulu Star-Advertiser

<http://www.govtech.com/state/Program-Spotlights-smart-grids-electric-cars.html>