

Energy Star Just One of InterContinental Chicago's Many Green Achievements - By Glenn Hasek

2008-05-26

The InterContinental Chicago, a 792-room hotel located on the Windy City's Magnificent Mile, has just obtained its Energy Star rating from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy.

The hotel, in a building constructed in 1929, is the first hotel in Chicago to earn the rating. The energy performance of commercial and industrial facilities is scored on a 1 to 100 scale and those facilities that achieve a score of 75 or higher are eligible for the Energy Star, indicating that they are among the top 25 percent of facilities in the country for energy performance.

The InterContinental Chicago has been awarded a rating of 88, indicating it is within the top 12 percent of energy efficient buildings in the country. According to EnergyStar.gov, 'commercial buildings that have earned the Energy Star use on average 35 percent less energy than typical similar buildings and generate one-third less carbon dioxide.'

The Energy Star achievement is the culmination of many different energy-saving initiatives that have been implemented throughout the hotel. A guestroom energy management system has been in place since 2002. It has generated energy savings of 23 percent. Compact fluorescent bulbs are used in every guestroom and in corridors, and T-8 linear fluorescents are used in back-of-house areas. T-1 cold cathode lamps are used in exit signs and stairwell areas.

Other Resource-Saving Steps

Raymond Kempf, director of engineering at the InterContinental Chicago, says he is currently testing dimmable CFLs in a meeting room. If the bulbs are a success, the savings will be significant. Kempf says that incandescents dimmed just 10 percent can last 200 percent longer than non-dimmed incandescents. The hotel already uses lighting controls in meeting areas to keep lights off when they are not needed. The lighting control system is also integrated with the heating and cooling system which ensures that meeting spaces are not heated or cooled unnecessarily.

To save water, which also reduces energy consumption related to heating water, 1.5 gallon per minute (gpm) aerators have been placed in all guestroom faucets. The faucets previously allowed a flow of 2.2 gpm. This step reduced related water consumption by 16 percent. Showerheads with a 2.0 gpm flow rate and water-saving dual-flush toilets in public restrooms also reduce consumption. A towel and linen reuse program further adds to the savings.

To reduce the volume of waste going to landfill, cardboard, glass, amenity bottles and kitchen oil and grease are recycled. Systems are also in place to safely recycle fluorescent lighting as well as batteries. Each month, a recycling specialist employed by the hotel's waste hauler offers recycling training to hotel staff.

Changes Up On the Roof

Beginning next month, some major changes will take place up on the roof of the hotel. The old bituminous membrane roof system will be removed and a new green roof will be installed. The green roof will include drought-resistant plants and cover a 1,200-square-foot area. It will mitigate the heat island effect from the building and capture a significant portion of the rain water that falls on the roof.

'It has a unique irrigation system built into it,' Kempf says. 'When it rains, the plants will be irrigated. Below the plants there is a reservoir that will hold water for times when the weather is dry.'

Kempf says he is investigating solar thermal and building integrated photovoltaic systems for the building's exterior.

Many Other Initiatives

Other green initiatives include the use of low/no-VOC paints and Forest Stewardship Council-certified woods, a formal green purchasing policy, organic menu options in the hotel's restaurant, a paperless banquet events order system, the purchase of renewable energy credits to offset 50 percent of the hotel's electricity consumption, and green wedding packages.

A green team, called the GREAT team (Green Resources Environmental Action Team) meets every two weeks and includes senior managers and top hotel executives. A GREAT newsletter is produced each month for staff and a Green Travel Report is placed in guestrooms. The report highlights the hotel's green initiatives and offers resource-saving tips.

Kempf says the hotel is very close to obtaining Green Seal certification and intends to pursue LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. LEED approval would not come until 2010 at the earliest, he says.

This article first appeared on the Green Lodging News website. To sign up to receive the weekly Green Lodging News newsletter, go to www.greenlodgingnews.com. Glenn Hasek can be reached at greenlodgingnews@aol.com.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article32787.html>

© 1998 - 2008 Nevistas and the author.

Brought to you by Hotel News Resource

Distribute your news on our Network

See what all the buzz is about at:

http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html