

Business Week Interview

Energy Efficiency in Buildings

Voiceover: As Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Jon Wellinghoff oversees an industry, the electricity business, in transition. As he points out, companies aren't making much money anymore building power plants that are paid for by increased electricity prices. So paradoxically, many of them are looking to make money by getting customers to use less, not more, of the product they sell. Energy efficiency itself has become a big new business and Wellinghoff is one of its biggest proponents.

Wellinghoff: "I've reduced the lighting energy usage in this office suite by 50 percent. I think, you know, a 30 to 50 percent savings is not unreasonable. I think it's potentially achievable. It would be a massive undertaking, however. It would take a lot of up-front capital to do so. And it would take a lot of time and effort, but it would create a lot of jobs."

VO: Wellinghoff is doing his own part to save energy. In his Washington, D.C., office, he's cut electricity use for lighting in half, with more efficient light bulbs and other steps.

Wellinghoff: "LED, light-emitting diode tube, with these LEDs all along the tube, as you can see it's putting out a different color light than the other one. But it actually puts out as much light, if not more, light. But the interesting thing is that this system, three lamps here, is using 45 watts. And this other system that we just looked at is using 90 watts, so you're actually using half the energy from this system than you're using for the other one."

Wellinghoff: "We put in these light shelves. These light shelves have a much more efficient fluorescent tube. They're still fluorescents, but they're a smaller tube, they're actually five-eighths of an inch in diameter, and they provide indirect light. So they bounce off the ceilings so she's got no glare into her screen at all. And if she needs any kind of a direct task light, she has an LED lamp. That is an LED task lamp."