

Computer may cut campus fuel costs

How much is a 10 percent energy saving worth? Texas A&M University, it could be worth \$1 million.

University engineers believe 10 percent of the fuel costs may be saved during the next year by using a computer to manage the cooling and heating systems. Currently 44 of the 150 campus buildings are monitored by hundreds of sensors buried in pipes to measure temperature, flow and pressure.

In addition to energy management, the system warns the operator if any equipment is broken.

Ronald Scott, manager of engineering design and energy for the university Physical Plant, said conservation is the second phase of any energy study.

"We first look at the existing system to see what will improve its efficiency," he said. "Once we are efficient, then we manage it."

Texas A&M is a self-sufficient city within a city, with its own power plant, water and sewer systems. Air conditioning is provided by a chilled water system and heating by hot water.

Scott said during peak times, from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m., 40,000 people may be on the campus. To provide the necessary 24 hours of services, the University's fuel will cost approximately \$10 million during the next fiscal year.

Scott said the initial study, which began with the installation of the computer four months ago, is aimed at improving the efficiency of the air conditioning and heating systems.

One way of saving money is to shut off the air conditioning at night. Scott said turning off the air circulation motors in the Zachry Engineering Center, a 324,400-square-foot classroom and laboratory structure, 600-horsepower-per-hour is being saved six to eight hours each day.

Cycling, or on-off switching, during pre-selected times in all buildings also saves electricity and has little effect on the comfort of individuals, he said.

The comfort range depends on the humidity, Scott said. The lower the humidity, the higher the temperature which feels comfortable. Texas A&M maintenance officials try to maintain 75 degrees with 50 percent relative humidity for air conditioning.

Earlier efforts to conserve energy which included reducing the lighting in all buildings, resulted in a 30 percent electrical saving. The University now plans to replace all the 40 watt fluorescent tubes with 35 watt tubes having approximately the same light output as the 40 watt bulbs, Scott said.

Texas A&M University received \$7 million in research grants during the first 10 months of the 1977-78 year. This figure equaled the funding for the previous year.

Robert R. Berg, director of University Research Office, said through June totals show a million increase over the same period last year. The university's fiscal year is Sept. 1 to Aug. 31.

Berg reported \$2,048,099 was received in June, including \$874,000 from the Robert A. Welch Foundation of Houston to support 50 basic industry research programs.

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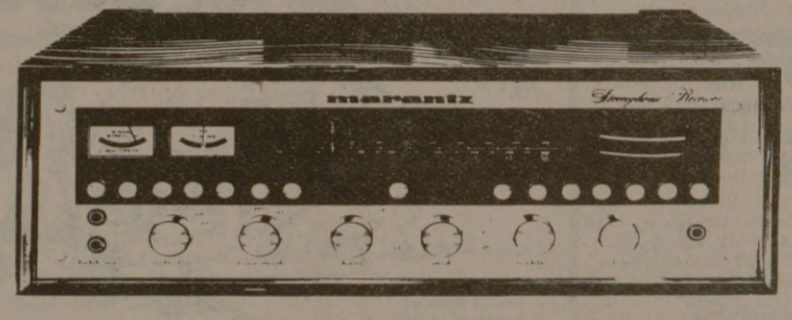
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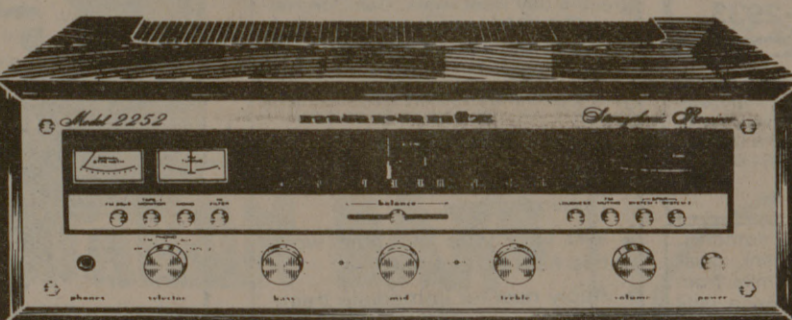
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