

Energy Rates Working Group

Minutes

July 7, 2003

Attendance:

Ruby Hargrave, Dennis Doi, Kris Foster, Tom Matsuda, Dave Waller, Sharon Miyashiro, Regina Gregory

A number of low-income issues related to energy were discussed:

Rental Property Challenges: The group recognized that many low-income households are renters. This means they are dependent upon the landlord to make investments in energy efficient systems. The landlord in many cases does not pay the utility bill, and therefore, does not have an incentive to undertake the investment. This situation presents a challenge in bringing energy efficient systems such as solar water heating to low-income households. It was also noted that many low-income households are living on a day to day basis, and these households do not have a long-term view of making a purchase and realizing lower electric bills later. Regina Gregory distributed information about Kauai Island Utility Cooperative's programs for landlords and low-income homeowners. The utility pays for up to 70% of the cost of a solar water heating system, and also provides no-cost energy saving devices.

Dave Waller gave statistics on public housing projects that installed solar water heaters and got rebates from HECO. It was suggested that a representative from HCDCH be invited to participate in the energy efficiency working group.

Utility-Owned Solar Systems: One suggestion to help with the rental property challenge would be to have the utility install and own the solar systems. Hawaiian Electric has been examining this option. At this point, some unanswered questions

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include the accounting treatment of the asset and the revenues, could a rebate be applied to the system to provide a lower cost to customers, and since a water heating system lasts 20 years, what happens when the house is sold.

Resiliency: Kris Foster noted that the question of “resiliency”—how much more low-income people could pay for their electric bills—is not appropriate, since they are already having difficulties in paying any more than their current bills. Any additional amount even if it would result in long term savings will not be acceptable to those on fixed incomes.

Other suggestions included:

- (1) extend the the rent subsidy program to include energy subsidies
- (2) expand use of weatherization funds to assist with purchasing more energy-efficient appliances such as refrigerators
- (3) Utility could give free fluorescent lightbulbs.

Dave Waller agreed to provide the group with information on energy use and demographical information.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, August 7, 12:00 to 1:30 at HCAP conference room.