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Columbia Grinding Transitions from Small Shop to Major Energy Saver
- Energy efficiency upgrades save \$33,500 annually at Oak Creek, Wis. plant -

MADISON, Wis. (August 12, 2009) — Like many Wisconsin businesses, Columbia Grinding, Inc. started out with a dream, a lot of hard work and limited resources. In 1953 the business opened as a 1,800-square-foot one-man shop in South Milwaukee. By 1978, the production workload grew and the first employee was hired. Today, Columbia Grinding has grown to 35 employees and a 43,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in the Oak Creek Industrial Park.

Although the company's values remain the same, over the years Columbia Grinding has enhanced its energy efficiency and high-performance standards to power its state-of-the-art equipment, processes and services.

With the help of Focus on Energy, Wisconsin's energy efficiency and renewable energy initiative, Columbia Grinding's Oak Creek, Wis. plant has reduced energy consumption by more than 230,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity and 14,000 therms of natural gas – enough energy to power 40 houses for a year. The company will also save \$33,500 on its energy bills each year.

Since 2008, Columbia Grinding has received \$13,500 in cash incentives from Focus on Energy to boost its efforts toward becoming more energy efficient. The biggest energy saver was an innovative air filtration system installed last month that will significantly reduce the facility's heating and air conditioning loads. The system connects with the existing energy management system to provide automated control of the make-up air and exhaust in the main production area.

“Focus on Energy has helped us save a lot of money while achieving higher air quality inside the plant,” said Richard Lussier, president of Columbia Grinding, Inc. “With the new controls and filtration equipment, we're keeping warm air inside the building in the winter to reduce our gas consumption. In the summer, the controls automatically make sure that hot plant air is going outside to lower our cooling costs.”

The plant also installed a variable speed drive to its coolant pumping system. This provides reduced operating costs and increased reliability by allowing more precise process operations, prolonged equipment life and reduced maintenance – all while using less energy.

“Columbia Grinding is a great example of an independently-owned business that is saving significant amounts of energy,” said Ken Williams, Focus on Energy’s business programs director. “By incorporating energy efficiency into its operation, Columbia Grinding’s bottom line will benefit, along with the environment and the community.”

Focus can help identify and evaluate energy saving opportunities, report findings with specific recommendations, develop energy management plans, find vendors and arrange technical training opportunities about energy conservation – helping companies improve their bottom lines.

For more information on Focus on Energy, call (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

About Columbia Grinding, Inc.

Located in Oak Creek, Wis., Columbia Grinding has worked hard to earn the reputation of the “flat work specialists” with more than 30 machines and several new processes and services including double disc grinding, lapping both single and double sided, flat honing/fine grinding, vibratory deburring, part washing and packaging. Columbia Grinding also has inspection capabilities with a state-of-the-art equipment and a quality lab. The company has also been ISO certified since May 2003. For more information, visit columbiagrinding.com.

About Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus information, resources and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed, or to complete projects sooner than scheduled. Its efforts help Wisconsin residents and businesses manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, protect our environment and control the state’s growing demand for electricity and natural gas. For more information, call (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

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