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New Edgerton Hospital Proves It's Cool to be the First to use Geothermal Heating

(Edgerton, WI) – Green isn't just a color these days; it's a way of life. And, it's a passion that has been at the forefront during the planning and construction of the new Edgerton Hospital and Health Services. But, what really puts Edgerton Hospital on the map as a pioneer in green building is the fact that it's the first hospital in the State of Wisconsin, as well as the first critical access hospital in the United States, to build using geothermal heating and cooling. And, they're not stopping there - high-performance electrical, onsite construction recycling, green roofs and zero volatile organic building materials are just a sampling of how this small, rural hospital plans to build by Mother Nature's guidelines.

Edgerton Hospital will use up to 40% less energy than other hospitals its size. Its patients will be warmed to know that their heating and cooling will have a very low impact on the environment. Geothermal also means a lower operating bill for the facility as well.

"I have no doubt that we'll reap the rewards of our geothermal system," said Jim Pernau, CEO of Edgerton Hospital. "Our patients will be comfortable. Our systems will be durable. And we will not be producing any form of pollution. Geothermal was the right way to go."

Geothermal energy is made possible thanks to the relatively constant temperature of the earth. The earth stores nearly 50 percent of all solar energy, making it a natural source of heat. Using "water-to-water" and "water-to-air" heat pumps, this natural and renewable resource trapped below the earth's surface is transformed into a usable form of energy. This energy –geothermal energy–will provide Edgerton Hospital with a dependable, natural and economic heating and cooling system year round. In the winter, these pumps will move the heat from the earth into the hospital. In the summer, they'll pull the heat from the hospital and discharge it into the ground.

As a hospital, it's more important than ever to consider the environment when building.

"Hospitals are one of the major consumers of energy and must be more focused on providing a cleaner and healthier environment for patients through the most efficient means. We are incorporating high efficiency equipment, energy star appliances, energy efficient windows, and other technologies all in an effort to provide a high performance building," said Jim Schultz, Edgerton Hospital's board of trustees

chair and core design team member. “Geothermal heating and cooling is a state of the art system and we are honored to offer our patients a hospital that will enhance their overall experience.”

The initial cost to install a geothermal system is not inexpensive - it’s approximately twice the cost of a regular HVAC system. However, an efficient geothermal system saves enough on utility bills that the investment can be recouped in five to ten years. The core building team at Edgerton Hospital did their homework before deciding to go this route. In the fall of 2006, members of the core design team visited the largest geothermal hospital in the world. They also solicited technical assistance from Alliant Energy and Focus on Energy. Using grant money from Focus on Energy, they were able to conduct a feasibility study which included an energy analysis on the efficiency of the entire building.

“When this idea was first presented, people were skeptical. But now that it’s becoming a reality and the benefits are emerging, everyone is really excited,” said Pernau.

Edgerton Hospital has hired the team at Sustainable Engineering Group, LLC out of Madison to design the well field, which will consist of a series of wells nearly 200 feet below the earth’s surface. There are currently 120 wells completed and by mid-October the total number will be finalized at just over 300.

GEOHERMAL ENERGY FACTS:

- Geothermal Energy has been around for as long as the Earth has existed. "Geo" means earth, and "thermal" means heat. So, geothermal means earth-heat.
- Geothermal heating and cooling technology has been given the best rating by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Geothermal energy is a renewable resource, and does not deplete non-renewable resources.
- Geothermal energy does not produce any form of pollution, and it does not contribute to the greenhouse effect.
- Buildings that use geothermal energy use up to 40% less energy than other high-efficiency buildings.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

Geothermal Digging: Drilling rigs at the site of the new Edgerton Hospital have been busy digging wells 200 feet below the earth’s surface.

Design Team: Edgerton Hospital’s design team has been instrumental in making geothermal a reality at the new hospital campus. From left, Jim Pernau, CEO, Tom Freeman, Sue Larson and Jim Schultz.

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Edgerton Hospital is a Critical Access Hospital. The hospital serves the communities of Edgerton, Milton and surrounding communities. Founded in 1923, the facility offers inpatient, outpatient, surgical, diagnostic, emergency, urgent care and rehabilitation services. It is an affiliate of SSM Health Care of Wisconsin. For additional information about Edgerton Hospital, please visit www.edgertonhospital.com.