

'Brazos Valley' Rebuilds Texas

After promoting renewable energy as a mechanical engineering student, professor and practitioner for over 20 years, it's natural that Dr. Dan Turner is enthusiastic about Rebuild America.

He said that, "Rebuild America is a cornerstone project" of Texas A&M University's Energy Systems Lab (ESL), where he is the division head. The Rebuild America program, founded in 1996, is called the **Brazos Valley Energy Conservation Coalition**.

In addition to running Brazos Valley, the Energy Systems Lab is one of the U.S. Department of Energy's Industrial Assessment Centers. Its 60 engineers and researchers also work on the State Energy Office's Loan Star Program, which provides infrastructure upgrade loans to state agencies, schools, and municipalities.

A Win-Win Situation

"Our goal [for Brazos Valley] is to provide energy efficiency to the public sector," Turner said. "Energy efficiency is important to all of us, whether from the standpoint of the environment, global warming, or just using less energy."

So far, Brazos Valley has completed walk-through audits of 7 million square feet of space for clients including Brazos County, Bryan Independent School District, and Wichita Falls Independent School District [Summer 1997 *Partner Update*]. Turner said they are well on their way

Brazos Valley: A Real Win-Win Situation

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to fulfilling their “hope to far exceed our stated goals, maybe even in our second year.”

Those goals include completing \$6 million of projects in 2 million square feet of space over five years. While they are focusing on capital investment, Turner said, “a side effect is job creation as we involve the private sector. This is a real win-win situation.”

A Spectrum of Services

Brazos Valley provides clients with the full spectrum of energy efficiency services, including energy audits, project design and installation, metering and monitoring, savings verification, and financing. “Texas Energy Engineering Services, Inc. is the design and consultation engineering firm. With their financing subsidiary, SmartMoney, we can do the whole project,” Turner said.

In a “unique approach” to marketing, Turner said that Brazos Valley does free walk-through audits. If there is potential for energy



Dr. Dan Turner

savings, clients pay for a detailed audit, where short-term metering and monitoring equipment is installed to provide on-site data. If clients agree to develop and implement a retrofit project, Brazos Valley reimburses them for part of the cost of the detailed audit.

“One key is that we have money available as a loan for engineering contracts,” Turner said. “Clients pay back the loan from their savings, and we do metering and monitoring to ensure the retrofit is working and report savings.”

Spreading the Word

As a mechanical engineering undergraduate at the University of Texas – Austin, Turner decided to focus on energy instead of

traditional design/control areas. He stayed to receive his master’s degree, and went on to earn a Ph.D. at the University of Oklahoma. “I’ve spent my career teaching and conducting research in renewables and energy conservation areas,” Turner said.

Turner and his team of faculty, staff and students are optimistic about the future for the Brazos Valley program. They are spreading the word about Rebuild America through a series of workshops across the state, and they’ve sent materials to schools, state agencies and municipalities.

“That we already have several million square feet committed is a pretty good indication of success,” Turner said. “We hope to build Rebuild America into a stable, long-lasting program.”