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How New York aims to raise building efficiency by 20 percent

By *SustainableBusiness.com*

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In an executive order issued during the waning days of 2012, NY Gov. Cuomo directed state agencies to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings 20 percent by 2020.

Going forward, energy efficiency will be considered as a standard part of the capital project planning process.

To implement this efficiency initiative -- among the most ambitious in the U.S. -- Cuomo also announced the start of "Build Smart NY," the implementation arm of the Executive Order.

Using energy data on state buildings, the implementation plan prioritizes the largest, least efficient buildings first for comprehensive whole building retrofits, to get the biggest bang on energy savings for every dollar spent.

Identifying buildings with the most opportunity to improve is a big part of driving energy savings, but it's not as simple as it appears. Data from New York City shows that some of its oldest buildings are more energy efficient than those that are LEED-certified.

Efficiency measures include the typical, but all important lighting upgrades, advanced heating, ventilating and air-conditioning systems, efficient electric motors and automated energy management systems.

"Improving energy efficiency in our buildings is a smart investment in our present and future," Cuomo says. "Through Build Smart NY, state government can produce significant savings for New York taxpayers and generate thousands of jobs, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by more than eight million metric tons - which is the same as taking one million cars off the road for one year. Furthermore, most of the projects will pay for themselves as their energy savings will cover their costs, making this initiative a financial and environmental win-win for New Yorkers."

Next page: How does the mandate play out?

The New York Power Authority will make \$450 million in low-cost financing available and agencies will be able to pay off any capital investments through energy savings.

Efficiency data is now available for more than 95 percent of state agency buildings -- about 180 million square feet. Work has already started on 30 million square feet.

Progress reports, case studies, energy savings, project costs and other information is available to the public on a newly launched Build Smart NY website. The website is powered by technology from New York City startup Honest Buildings, Inc.

"The Build Smart NY initiative is another example of Governor Cuomo's serious commitment to increasing energy efficiency across New York State," says Francis Murray Jr., CEO of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA).

"NYSERDA is proud to take part in this effort as we work with partners in government and the private sector to effect a permanent transformation in the way new buildings are designed and constructed, and existing buildings are retrofitted through innovative, cost-effective energy efficiency measures. Projects under Build Smart NY will decrease government energy use, reduce energy costs and increase jobs in our growing energy-efficiency sector."

Last week, [NY announced another \\$250 million for renewable energy projects](#) as part of its [Energy Highway Blueprint](#).

The Build Smart NY website is [here](#).

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