

A Year Later, High School Turbine Successfully Turning

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

For the past year a small wind turbine beside the borough building has been producing small amounts of electricity for the municipal government offices below it. While much smaller than the six turbines on Pillar Mountain, Kodiak's seventh turbine has served as an educational tool for high school students and helped fuel the push for renewable energy among Kodiak's younger generation.

Barry Altenof is the career technology coordinator for the school district and said the turbine has generated about 1,780 kilowatt hours in the last 12 months.

"That's a fair amount. I think that's roughly, maybe three months worth of electricity at the household level."

Altenof said the turbine isn't supposed to be a large capacity generator, but it produces about two household circuits worth of power.

"It's connected directly to the breaker panel in the borough building so they benefit directly from the output of the generator. It's an efficiency in that it replaces what they would otherwise demand from KEA, so it's a small efficiency but an efficiency nonetheless."

He said he couldn't put a dollar value on the savings in terms of the building's electrical bill.

Since being placed on the building 11 months ago, Altenof said the turbine has been used frequently by Kodiak High School physics and chemistry students. They've been able to monitor the real-time output of the generator, and learn how the entire set up works.

"The company that made the generator produces a software package that allows people to monitor that output and what we're trying to do, or rather what they're trying to do, is create a software package that will allow anybody to go to the district website and look at, or rather see, a windmill icon and then click on that icon and be able to see for themselves the real time

output of the turbine. Thus far we can't do that. But that's the goal and there's several people in the Wind for Schools program in Fairbanks who are working on that web connection as we speak. The goal is to have that done before the year is out.

Altenof said he's pleased with the project's success and thinks it's been a huge asset to the high school and community.

"It's a great visual symbol for kids and people who are interested in alternative energy that keeps us thinking keeps us talking with each other about ways to save money on our power bill. I think that's pretty standard conversation in these times. So it's both a symbol and it's a working generator."

He said he hopes to use the turbine as a learning tool for middle school and elementary school students in the coming year.