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A Result Demonstration

In

Small Grocery Stores/Seafood Markets Refrigeration Servicing

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Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service LSU Agricultural Center Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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Conducted In

Jefferson and Orleans Parishes

by

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- 1 -

Table of Contents

PAGE NO.

I.	Design of Study	3
11.	Demonstration Objectives	6
111.	Selection of Site and Definition of Study	7
IV.	Methodology	9
۷.	Data Collection & Instrumentation 1	2
VI.	Results & Discussion 1	3
VII.	Conclusions & Recommendations	:3
VIII.	References	5
IX.	Appendix	6

Tables

Table	1	Data	Summ	ary		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	13
Table	2	Data	Unit	1	•	•	•	٠	•	•	•	•	•	Appendix
Table	3	Data	Unit	2	٠	•	•	•	•	•	•	٠	•	Appendix
Table	4	Data	Unit	3	•	•	•	•	٠	•	•	•	•	Appendix
Table	5	Data	Unit	4	•	•	•	•	•.	•	•	•	•	Appendix
Table	6	Data	Unit	5	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Appendix
Table	7	Data	Unit	6	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Appendix
Table	8	Data	Unit	7	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Appendix
Table	9	Data	Unit	8	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Appendix

- 2 -

A Result Demonstration in Small Grocery Stores/Seafood Markets Refrigeration Servicing

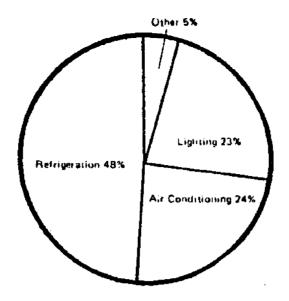
I. Design of Study

Background & Purpose

Small grocery stores, with long operating hours, large refrigeration requirements, and bright lighting levels, use more energy than do the more conventional retail stores. In many respects seafood markets are similar to small grocery stores in their energy use patterns since both have relatively large refrigeration requirements. Both are important fixtures in the New Orleans area. These are the types of stores considered in this work.

The typical store in the New Orleans Metro Area requires little energy for heating but uses large amounts of electricity for freezing and refrigerating their products. For example, in a study of a similar store, refrigeration accounted for almost half of the electricity consumed¹. Air conditioners and lights used the remainder in almost equal amounts. These portions are illustrated in the usage graph.

- 3 -



Preventative maintenance of air conditioning equipment has been demonstrated to restore capacity, and lower utility $\cos s^2 \delta^3$. Since refrigeration equipment and air conditioning equipment are similar in many ways, it would be expected that similar benefits could be obtained by preventative maintanance of refrigeration equipment. A survey of refrigeration manufacturers, service personnel, university research, and trade associations failed to provide information on the magnitude of the effect in a typical commercial operation, and in particular, for a typical operation in the New Orleans area. Several references deal with the increase of energy consumption from dirty condenser coils, blockage of air flow across the condenser coils, short circuiting of air flow, dirty fan blades, and dirty evaporator coils.

- 4 -

However, the references consider the increased consumption from a qualitative rather than quantitative standpoint, and thus can not be used to compare the cost of servicing to savings from servicing. It is also generally recognized that dirty condenser units can increase head pressures and shorten equipment life and that dirty evaporator coils can greatly reduce capacity.

Because of the importance of small grocery stores/seafood markets in the Metro area, the Orleans Parish Energy Advisory Committee decided that a result demonstration dealing with energy conservation in these types of stores would be appropriate.

Accordingly, the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service in conjunction with the Orleans Parish Energy Advisory Committee (Metro New Orleans Area) elected to develop a refrigeration result demonstration that would emphasize maintenance.

- 5 -

II. Demonstration Objectives

- Establish the potential for lowering utility costs to the consumer through preventative maintenance and service.
- 2. Develop information through result demonstrations to be incorporated into future educational programs.
- 3. Compare open and closed freezer display cases.
- 4. Obtain other applicable information which may become evident during the course of the work.

- 6 -

III. Selection of Sites and Definition of Study

Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service agents from Orleans and Jefferson Parishes and Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service engineering specialists from LSU, Baton Rouge, met with the Louisiana Grocers Association for help in obtaining cooperators for the demonstration. The Louisiana Grocers Association published an article in their trade journal which explained the demonstration and gave participation details. As a result thirty three volunteers received a walk through inspection and preliminary evaluation.

At the completion of the preliminary evaluation, the team met with the Orleans Parish Energy Advisory Committee (Metro New Orleans Area) and selected six stores to participate. The stores were selected on the basis of obtaining a representative cross section. Three of the businesses were in Jefferson Parish (both westbank & eastbank) and the other three were in Orleans Parish.

Three primary energy conservation opportunities were found during the preliminary evaluation. They were maintenance (cleaning) of the units, proper ventilation for the units and equipment selection.

Maintenance on the units varied from a monthly maintenance service by refrigeration professionals to "fix it when it breaks", the latter being far more common. In between these extremes was servicing performed by store personnel.

The most serious common ventilation problem was that many condenser units would be located close together where the hot exhaust from one would supply the "cooling" air to another or recycle it to

- 7 -

itself. The tendency for these units to be in a closed area, perhaps because of space limitations or security reasons, increases the likelihood of this problem occurring. The other common problem was the tendency to stock items in front of the intake grill of self contained units.

A particularly striking revelation, at one store, was that it was often heated in the summer time, otherwise it would be too cold for comfort. This store had a large number of open refrigerated and freezer display cases. It was apparent to us that there was considerable refrigeration loss from these boxes and that it was much more from open than from closed units.

Because of these observations it was decided that the effect of maintenance on refrigeration units which were serviced on a regular basis by store personnel, and on units which were serviced on a "fix it when it breaks" basis should be demonstrated. No service was to be done at the two stores with a preventative maintenance contract, however, it was decided to use one of the stores to demonstrate the relative efficiency of open versus closed boxes and to serve as a source of a baseline for weather effects. The effect of improper ventilation of the condenser units was of great interest but was not as amenable to demonstration because of the necessity of altering physical structures to accomplish a change. It was decided to try to piggyback this onto a demonstration of maintenance and thus one of the chosen units was one located in a closed in lean-to with other condensing units. It was initially planned that after sufficient data on the effect of cleaning was obtained, we would attempt to increase ventilation by opening up the lean-to and observe the effect.

- 8 -

IV. Methodology

The six small grocery store owners/supervisors were requested to operate their refrigeration units on a routine basis even though monitoring equipment was installed. They were briefed that daily visits by Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service agents would in no way interfere with their normal business operation. They were further advised that the duration of the demonstration would last six weeks. In addition they were asked to monitor the loading of the boxes in order that any variation in load over the test period could be accounted for.

The demonstration was divided into two three week periods. The first three week period consisted of monitoring the electrical usage of the refrigeration units with a KWH meter wired to each condenser unit. This provided a base line of energy consumption before servicing. During this time ambient conditions and observations were recorded.

Three units had only 20 days instead of 21 days of recorded data in the first time period. Consumption data was adjusted for these units by adding an average days' consumption in the first period to the total consumption in that period.

At the end of the first three week period, the refrigeration units were serviced by a local refrigeration service company.

- 9 -

The preventative maintenance services performed were variable from unit to unit and were based upon the judgment of the licensed professional and a reasonable level of practicality. These services were performed under the restraint that service be reflective of those performed in a routine preventative maintenance call.

The services performed on the refrigeration units were:

- Condenser coils cleaned, chemically on all outside condenser units, with compressed gas on condenser units located in the store.
- Evaporator coils checked and cleaned with brush or compressed
 gas as required.
- 3. Amp draw and sight glass checked and freon added as required.
- 4. Fan belts, pulleys, and component parts inspected.

The monitoring by Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service agents consisted of:

- 1. Inside and outside sling psychrometer readings.
- 2. Kilowatt hour meter reading.
- 3. Demand reading on selected equipment.
- 4. Observations of foodstuff storage in monitored boxes.
- Conferences with owners/managers concerning any irregularities in operation or changes in load conditions.
- 6. Other pertinent observations.
- 7. Time of day each reading was taken.

- 10 -

Three units were not serviced. Two of these had roof mounted condenser units and were being professionally serviced monthly on a contract basis. The third unit was completely contained in a garage and was serviced on a "fix-it-when-it-breaks" basis. These three units provided a control to account for a variation in weather conditions. Monitoring was continued for three weeks following the servicing.

- 11 -

V. Data Collection Instrumentation

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Instrumentation

Instrumentation for the demonstrations consisted of:

- 1. Two sling psychrometers.
- 2. Kilowatt hour meter (four with demand).

- 12 -

VI. Results and Discussion

The data taken during the six week demonstration period is summarized in Table 1. A brief discussion of each unit will follow:

Unit #	KWH 1st Period 9/17 - 10/7	KWH 2nd Period 10/7 - 10/28	KWH Change	% Change of KWH	Notes
		Control			Group
1	695*	654	-41	-5.9	Closed freezer in garage, 40" high X 80" long X 27" deep, nominal l½hp
2	1,239	1,349	110	8.9	Open freezer, 43" high, X 12' long 30" deep, split unit 3 phase, nominal 7½ hp
3	561	596	35	6.2	Closed freezer, 54" high X 10' long X 27" deep split unit, 3 phase nominal 5 hp, monthly service
	Monthl	y cleaning by s	store pers	sonnel	
4	40 6	395	-11	-2.6	Meat case, 28" high X 98" long X 24" deep, self contained unit, nominal 12 hp, serviced 10/7
5	449	411	-38	-8.5	Open freezer, 21" high X 88" long X 28" deep, self contained nominal 3/4 hp bad defrost timer, serviced 10/7
	Fix it	when it breaks	maintenar	nce	
6	1,423*	1,076	-347	-24.4	Open refrigerated case, 40" high X 20' long by 36" deep, split unit, nominal 3 hp, serviced 10/7
7	434*	329	-105	-24.2	Open meat case with cover, 8" high X 12' long X 35" deep, split system, nominal 12 hp, serviced 10/7
8	907	658	-249	-27.5	Walk in refrigerator, 8 3/4' high X 9½' X 13', split system nominal 5 hp, serviced 10/7
* Adii	usted to 21 day	vs of operation	1.		

Table I. Data Summary

* Adjusted to 21 days of operation.

- 13 -

Unit 1 was a closed freezer located in the garage. There was no regular preventative maintenance performed on this unit. No maintenance was performed for the purpose of this demonstration. Thus, this unit served as a check on the affect of weather changes on the energy requirements. This unit had 20 days of monitored operation during the first period of operation.

During the first period 695* kilowatt hours were consumed. There were 654 kilowatt hours consumed in the second period. There was a net reduction of 41 kwh or 5.9% in energy consumption. According to the store owner, there was essentially no change in the loading of the freezer from one period to the next.

Units 2 & 3 were located in the same store. Both had roof mounted condensers and both were serviced under a monthly service contract by a professional refrigeration company. The loading on both boxes was similar from one period to the next and the amount of food loaded did not change substantially. In addition, the foodstuffs were loaded into the freezer in a frozen condition so they did not constitute a large additional load.

Unit 2 was an open freezer (vertical display) with 43 square feet of face area and a depth varying from 30" to 17". Products were frequently stacked so that they extended beyond the recommended placement line. It is our opinion that this contributed to the flow of refrigerated air into the store. This unit consumed 1,239 kilowatt hours of electricity during the first period of the study and 1,349 during the second period. The consumption thus increased by 110 kwh or 8.9%.

* Adjusted to 21 days of operation.

- 14 -

Unit 3 was a closed case freezer (vertical display) with 45 square feet of face area and a depth of 27". It was a much newer case than the open freezer and consumed only 561 kilowatt hours during the first period and 596 kilowatt hours during the second period. This represented a 35 kwh or 6.2% increase.

Units 4 & 5 were located in the same store and both received regular service by store personnel. Service consisted of blowing out the condenser coils monthly with a CO_2 cylinder. The professional servicing on both boxes consisted of pulling the condenser out and thoroughly cleaning the condenser with compressed gas.

Unit 4 was a closed meat display case. It consumed 406 kilowatt hours during the first period and after servicing by a professional refrigeration company, it consumed 395 kilowatt hours during the second period. This represents a reduction of 11 kilowatt hours or 2.6% after servicing.

Unit 5 was an open chest freezer which had a bad defrost timer and the evaporator coils were frosted over. It consumed 449 kilowatt hours during the first period and 411 kilowatt hours during the second period after professional servicing. No servicing was done on the defrost timer because it was an expense that would not normally be associated with preventative maintenance calls. After servicing, 38 less kilowatt hours were consumed than before servicing a difference of 8.5%.

* Adjusted to 21 days of operation.

- 15 -

Unit 6 was a large open refrigerated case used for fruit and vegetable display. It operated under "service-it-when-it-breaks" maintenance scheme. This unit had 20 days of monitored operation during the first period of operation. It consumed 1,423* kilowatt hours during the first period and 1,076 kwh during the second period after service. This represents a 347 kilowatt hour reduction in consumption or 24.4%. Servicing consisted of chemically cleaning the outside condenser coils and adding freon to the system.

Unit 7 was an open meat display case. There was a plastic covering placed over the case to contain cold air. It was operating on a "service-when-it-breaks" maintenance basis. This unit had 20 days of operation during the first period of operation. During the first period 430* kilowatt hours were consumed and 329 kilowatt hours were consumed during the second period. This represents a 101 kilowatt hour reduction or 23.5%. Service consisted of chemically cleaning the outside condenser coil. The condensing unit was housed with other condensing units on a closed lean-to on the exterior wall of the building. On the evening of the second day of monitoring, one of the condensing units in the lean-to over heated. To correct this, the sides of the lean-to were torn off to provide better air circulation.

Unit 8 was a walk in cooler with a remote condenser located on the roof. The usual mode of servicing was "service-when-it-breaks", however, just prior to the start of the demonstration, the interior was cleaned by store personnel since it had gotten to a point where

* Adjusted to 21 days of operation.

- 16 -

performance was suffering. During the first period 907 kilowatt hours were consumed and 658 kilowatt hours were consumed during the second period after professional servicing. This is reduction of 249 kilowatt hours or 27.5%. Loading of the walk in cooler was essentially the same from one period to the next. Service consisted of chemically cleaning the outside condenser coils. Inspection of the interior evaporator coils revealed that the store personnel had done a good job in cleaning them.

There are three natural groupings for the units in the demonstration. The first is on those units where no service was performed for the purpose of the demonstration. These are units 1, 2, and 3. In performing no service on the units, the effect of weather can The first unit had a 5.9% decrease in kilowatt hour be estimated. consumption while on units 2 and 3 the consumption increased 8.9% and 6.2% respectively. The owners stated that loading of the boxes was essentially the same in both periods. The weather during this time was cooler during the first period than during the second.

There was no consistent pattern in the change of consumption. One unit had a decrease in consumption, two had an increase. The entire unit which had decreased consumption was located in a garage. This decrease in consumption corresponded with a 13°F decrease in dry bulb temperature and 12.7°F decrease in wet bulb temperature. The units which had an increase in consumption were both located in the same store and were split systems. The conditioned boxes experienced a 3.2°F dry bulb and 1.5°F degree wet bulb temperature decrease during the second part of the study. The boxes which were serviced all had a decrease in The temperature which the conditioned boxes were exposed consumption. to decreased in a range of 2.1 to 4.9°F dry bulb and 2.3 to 4.6 wet bulb.

- 17 -

The percentage change of consumption was greatest for the units which had increased consumption. If these results were applied directly, predicted energy consumption (without professional servicing) would be higher in the second period than in the first. Since one would usually expect a decreased energy consumption with cool weather, and the control group exhibited opposite tendencies, a conservative approach of discounting any weather effects on energy consumption was adopted.

Units 2 and 3 present a good comparison between energy consumption of the open and closed freezers. The capacity of the closed freezer was actually slightly higher than that of the the open freezer and the energy consumption was less than ½ of the open freezer. Although the closed box was a newer model than the open box, much of the difference can be attributed to the design of the open versus closed freezer. As was noted previously there was a considerable amount of refrigerated air lost from the open freezer. In fact there was so much refrigeration being dumped into this store that the heater was activated in the summer so it would not be too cold for the customers.

The second grouping would be the two units which were regularly serviced by store personnel. These are units 4 and 5, both located in the same store. Unit 4 was a meat case and was well maintained. During professional servicing, very little dust or dirt was removed from the unit. There was an 11 kilowatt hour decrease in consumption after professional cleaning, which was relatively small. The second unit was an open chest freezer which had more difficult access to the condenser coils. When it was professionally cleaned quite a bit more dirt was removed than from the refrigeration unit. The decrease in kilowatt hour consumption was 38 kilowatt hours or 8.5%. Again, even though this was more than the previous unit, it is a modest decrease.

- 18 -

The next grouping would be those units serviced on a fix-when-it-breaks basis. These consisted of units 6, 7 and 8. All three of these units had over a 20% reduction of energy consumption after servicing.

Unit 6, an open refrigeration case had a 347 kilowatt hour or 24.4% reduction in energy consumption after servicing. Unit 7, an open meat case with a cover, had a 101 kilowatt hour reduction in consumption or 23.5%. This is the unit which had ventilation problems due to its location in a closed lean-to. After two days of monitoring the lean-to was opened up to provide better air circulation for the condensing units. The first two days 58 kilowatt hours were consumed for an average of 29 kilowatt hours per day. The remanding 18 days in the first period accounted for 372 kilowatt hours or an average of 20.7 kilowatt hours per This was a 8.7 kilowatt hour reduction in consumption or 30% dav. change. This is obviously a significant factor. If the consumption is taken the same as the average over the following 18 days then there would be 434 kilowatt hours consumed prior to service on a 21 day basis, and 329 kilowatt hours consumed after service. The service resulted in a 105 kilowatt hour reduction in consumption or 24.2%.

Unit 8 had a 249 kilowatt hour reduction (27.5) in energy consumption after service.

As would be expected, maintenance had the most significant effect in reducing energy consumption on those units which were poorly maintained. Those units were the ones maintained on a "fix-when-it-breaks" basis. If we adjust the data for unit 7 to account for the effect of opening up the

- 19 -

lean-to (which results in less saving) then the kilowatt hour savings per month ranges from 150 kilowatt hours for this unit to 496 kilowatt hours for unit 6. The average monthly kilowatt hours savings for the three units was 334. If electricity costs an average of 8c per kilowatt hour the resulting savings per unit would range from \$12.00 per month to \$39.68 per month. The average saving would be \$26.72 per month for each unit. If these savings could be maintained for an entire year it would result in \$320.64 average yearly savings per unit. The savings, of course, range depending upon the consumption of the unit. But, even the smallest unit savings of \$12.00 per month will result in \$144.00 savings if maintained for a 12 month period.

The group of units which were serviced prior to the demonstration by store personnel exhibited savings ranging from 16 to 54 kilowatt hours per unit per month. At 8c per kilowatt this is an equivalent range of \$1.28 to \$4.32 per unit per month or an average of \$2.80 per month for each unit. Yearly savings for each unit would range from a low of \$15.36 to a high of \$51.84 for an average annual savings for the two units of \$33.60 per unit. These savings are modest and approach the cost of servicing if only one or two units are serviced. If the store had more units the cost per unit for servicing would decrease since payment would be for additional service time rather than for the trip out plus service time. The economic benefit of professional servicing under these conditions is not nearly as apparent as under the previous conditions. It almost appears to be a toss up. There is an additional consideration in that a yearly servicing could also be viewed as a preventative check

-20-

up which may prevent problems from occurring, perhaps saving the food contained in the refrigerated food display unit. It can be easily seen that there is a definite value of maintaining the unit by store personnel as compared to a "fix-it-when-it-breaks" maintenance schedule.

Two other energy conservation measures indicated very large potentials for savings. The first of these was providing proper air circulation for the condensing units. Unit 7 exhibited a potential savings of 261 kilowatt hours per month (29.6%) due to reduction in restriction of air circulation to the condensing units. At 8¢ per kilowatt hour this would result in a \$20.88 per month savings for the single unit or \$250.56 per year. Greater savings should be obtained for each of the other units in the lean-to since this was one of the smaller units in terms of energy consumption. Providing proper ventilation is imperative and could be the most cost effective energy conservation measure since it will benefit all the units in the area and help prevent breakdowns. It should be noted that this was also an open case unit but had a cover over the open area. Because it had the lowest energy consumption of any unit after servicing, we feel this is an indication of a potential savings by using such a covering. It may be more viable to cover the case only at night so that the display of the meat would not be hampered.

The other area of savings indicated was in the choice of refrigeration case. We compared an open freezer to a closed freezer of approximately the same size. Both freezers were vertical display and were maintained under a monthly service contract. During the same period

- 21 -

the open freezer consumed 2,588 kilowatt hours while the closed freezer consumed 1,157 kilowatt hours. This savings is the equivalent to 1,022 kilowatt hours per month. At 8¢ per kilowatt hour this would result in an \$81.76 per unit per month savings or \$981.12 per year. It is recognized that the data is not definitive but because of the magnitude of indicated savings it is an interesting potential area of energy conservation.

- 22 -

Based upon the results of this demonstration it can be concluded that yearly preventative maintenance by a professional refrigeration mechanic is cost effective for refrigeration units which have no regular service. On a yearly basis the average savings was \$320.64 per unit. Even the lowest unit savings of \$144.00 per year would be more than enough to pay the cost of service. Savings obtained for the year may not be as high as quoted depending on how long the effect of the servicing lasts, but, even if only half the savings were generated, it would still be more than cost effective, particularly if there is more than one refrigeration unit in the store, as is usually the case.

On units maintained by the store owners the economic benefit of the yearly professional cleaning may not be justified strictly on the basis of energy savings. The average annual savings was \$33.60 per unit. If the savings were only half of this or \$16.80 it would be necessary to have four or five units in order to justify the cost of service on an energy savings basis.

If the condenser units are placed too close together or do not have adequate air circulation significant increases in cost of operation will occur. Thus, care should be taken to provide adequate ventilation and air movement for condensing units. In addition it appears there is a significant difference between the cost of operation for open and closed (vertical display) freezing units and quite possibly, by extension, refrigeration units.

- 23 -

Further demonstrations and study along the lines of those suggested by this demonstration would be helpful in clearly quantifying the benefits of maintenance, closed versus open cases and adequate ventilation for condenser units. Among other factors it would be interesting to know how long the benefits of servicing continue.

In conclusion, the typical grocery store/seafood market could benefit by applying the results of this study to their operations. Furthermore, there is an educational need by this sector of the community. This need can be met by the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service programs.

- 24 -

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- 25 -

IX. Appendix

- 26 -

DATE	:TIME	a EN	SIDE		TSIDE	:KW	∗КМН ∗КМН	:REMARKS
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Executive Summary

The effect of maintenance on electrical consumption of refrigeration and freezer units was demonstrated. Eight individual units were assigned to three groupings: Group 1, a control group, Group 2, a group which received regular maintenance by store personnel, and Group 3, a group which received no scheduled maintenance. Professional service resulted in an average savings of 35 kwh or \$2.80 per unit per month for group 2 units and 334 kwh or \$26.72 per unit per month for group 2 units. These results clearly demonstrate the need for and cost effectiveness of regular maintenance. Inadequate ventilation of a unit was shown to cause an increased consumption of 261 kwh or \$20.88 per month. In addition it was observed that a closed freezer box had less than half the energy consumption of a similar size open freezer box.