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## SPECIAL REPORT

### Down to the Wire

**Wired device lets building owners regulate energy use**  
By BOB CHUVALA

Ed Winiarski thinks "dumb buildings" can be transformed into "smart buildings" that can save upward of 15 percent on energy costs with a wireless, Internet-based system that can make a dent in the nation's oil consumption.

**Company markets battery-based backup power system**  
By CHRISTINA OCCHIPINTI

Gaia Power Technologies is looking to capitalize on an emerging market for power alternatives, fueled by business owners and individuals angered by recent power outages that kept some in the dark for days.

**Dramas in electricity, from coast to coast**  
By MAUREEN MORGAN

The documentary "Who Killed the Electric Car?" by Chris Paine details the demise of General Motor's electric car, the "EV1." Even though the "killing" occurred only two years ago in California, the news seems to have been astonishingly unnewsworthy, unreported in mainline news media, and the documentary itself consigned to limited exposure.

**Frayed lines, nerves spark Con Ed hearings**  
By ALEX PHILIPPIDIS & BOB ROZYCKI

Con Edison has long been the brightest light among the state's power providers, but this year's storms have dimmed its luster in Westchester.

Sneak a peak at their interior work environments

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By Andi Gray

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### Wireless device lets building owners regulate energy use

By BOB CHUVALA

Ed Winiarski thinks "dumb buildings" can be transformed into "smart buildings" that can save upward of 15 percent on energy costs with a wireless, Internet-based system that can make a dent in the nation's oil consumption.

"The largest consumer of energy is not the automobile," said Winiarski, president and chief executive officer of Optimum Applied Systems in Hawthorne. "The largest consumer of energy is buildings." Large commercial buildings account for 65 percent of electricity use and 36 percent of total energy use in the U.S., he said.

And people don't have to make major lifestyle changes to lower energy consumption while keeping buildings comfortable, he said. Commercial building owners or managers "can take control of their building, make people comfortable, save money and shrink foreign oil imports."

One way to do that is to retrofit existing buildings or design new ones with computer-based systems that turn commercial buildings' oil burners on in response to demand for heat or domestic hot water, eliminating timers that turn the burners on in the morning and off at night. Buildings with boilers on timers are easy to spot. "Just walk through any residential or commercial area and you'll see windows open in the middle of January," he said.

Computer-based systems that Optimum Applied Systems designs and sells reduce boiler run time, "which is the equivalent of miles per gallon for your car." The systems "are similar in principal to a home-heating computer thermostat," he said. "It's a box that gets mounted in the boiler room and is connected to the boiler and sensors inside and outside the building" by broadband Internet, so a building's energy consumption can even be regulated off-site. Similar devices operate HVAC systems.

"You can put a smart device anywhere in the building, and it all gets routed through a central system that I can talk to from anywhere in the world," Winiarski said.

#### One of the first

Winiarski is just one of a new generation of entrepreneurs and building designers taking energy savings down to the grassroots level. In Connecticut's Fairfield County, the new, \$48 million science building at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury that opened last school year, for example, is the first state building in Connecticut to receive a Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certification. The certification is given to buildings that are designed to conserve energy and reduce operating costs.

Planning for the state-of-the-art science building began in 1996, and "we jumped right on this relatively new initiative" of constructing a green building, said Tom Curran, director of planning and engineering at WestConn. "We thought it was important to look at energy conservation and green buildings."

Down county, three multimillion-dollar mansions being built by the Manhattan-based Stillman Organization Ltd. will be green to the point that monthly electric bills should

be zero. Solar-energy systems should generate enough daytime electricity to sell to Connecticut Light & Power (CL&P), but the homes will use the utility's electricity at night, creating a financial wash.

And in Newtown, Conn., Curtis Packaging Corp. has contracted to buy more than 4.5 million kilowatt-hours (kwh) of windmill-generated energy each year for the next three years under the Connecticut Clean Energy Options Program. "The extra money we pay each month allows CL&P to get their energy from wind sources, not from coal and other fossil fuels," said Don Droppo Jr., vice president of sales and marketing at Curtis.

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