

# Airport flips switch on streetlights

## Turning off alternating lamps part of effort to save energy

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Turning off streetlights leading to the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport is part of an effort to save energy and cash.

Every other streetlight on the road leading to the airport has been disconnected for a little more than a week, said Kelly Johnson, airport director.

The effort to conserve energy at the airport also includes spending \$5,600 on a study of other ways to cut energy consumption, Johnson said.

Johnson said while there is an ongoing search for ways to save money, turning off the lights isn't indicative of hard times.

"It's not because we can't pay the light bill," she said. "We're OK so far — they'll send me home first."

Airport staff members have been talking in earnest about reducing the streetlights for five or six months. The decision was made about a month ago, Johnson said.

Johnson said the streetlights are about 130 to 140 feet apart.

None of the lights in parking areas has been shut off, Johnson said. She didn't have an estimate on what the airport expects to save.

Turning off unneeded lights isn't a new practice at the airport. Johnson said that electrical systems in the terminal are controlled by computer, which shuts off certain applications, such as escalators, after peak times.

Runway lights are also programmed to shut off after the control tower closes, Johnson said. When the tower is closed, pilots can remotely operate the lights via radio signal, she said. The lights shut off after 15 minutes.

The road to the airport was purposely designed with too many streetlights, said Scott Van Laningham, the airport's chief executive officer.

"Ultimately that was designed to be a four lane highway — to double it," Van Laningham said. "Our thinking at the time was when you did that you'd move every other light to the other side. We've all said, almost from the day we opened, 'Man, that's a lot of lights.'"

Van Laningham said the airport is looking to reduce its environmental impact. He said they are also trying to do everything possible to keep overhead down to limit the strain on tenants.

To that end, the airport hired

GA Engineers Inc., to conduct an energy audit, Van Laningham said. The streetlight decision wasn't a result of that study, but is in the same vein.

Airports across the country are looking at different ways of harnessing natural energy, Van Laningham said. Some have solar panels and others harness wind power, which he said may be viable at the regional airport.

Greg Anderson, owner of GA Engineers, said the audit will take about 100 hours, which involves surveying the entire airport operation.

Demand for such audits has increased as energy costs have risen, Anderson said. He said schools and hospitals used to be the primary customers of energy audits because of federal grants.

Many changes, such as switching to more energy-efficient light bulbs, are unnoticed by the general public, Anderson said.

Cutting back on streetlights hasn't had a significant impact on those that drive the road frequently.

"We haven't noticed it at all," said Joe Washington, owner of NWA Taxi and Hotel Executive Transportation.

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I edited this story on the rim and wrote the headline and deck. This story required fairly minor editing — mostly a misplaced comma or two — but it did have "street light" instead of "streetlight" throughout. The dictionary specifies that it should be one word.