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Hotel goes green

From staff reports

Add another name to the growing list of businesses installing high-tech geothermal devices for heating and cooling.

Springhill Suites hotel on Pensacola Beach recently won a first place international technology award from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Condition Engineers.

Working with Gulf Power Co. technicians and contractors, the hotel installed underground pipes to use the earth's constant temperature to heat and cool the 117-room facility.

Following installation of the geothermal system, which has no outside units to rust in the salty beach air, the 80,145-square-foot hotel found it routinely uses about 37 percent less energy than other buildings of its size.

The 150-ton geothermal system ? one of the largest installed in Northwest Florida ? was combined with energy-saving technologies that included compact fluorescent light bulbs and ozone-saving laundry equipment.

The geothermal heat pumps also keep the outdoor pool heated to 85 degrees and the spa to 102 degrees ? with an 86 percent increase in efficiency over conventional equipment.

Water-cooled ice machines, served by the same loop system, operate at a 23 percent energy advantage.

Gulf Power assisted with more than 180 geothermal installations in 2007.