

# The Voice of Experience

## Ellwood Fire District, Tonawanda, NY

130 kW Generator, Natural Gas, Mounted on the Roof

### **Organization**

1. *What geographic area does your organization cover?*

The Ellwood Fire District is a political sub-division of the State of New York. It is located in the County of Erie in the Town of Tonawanda. **The members of the Ellwood Fire Volunteer Company No.1 are 100% volunteer.** The men and equipment of Ellwood *protect over 5000 residences and businesses* valued at almost \$280,000,000 within the District borders. In addition, the Fire Company protects an industrial area along the Niagara River jointly with other fire companies in the Town of Tonawanda and the Village of Kenmore.



2. *How is your organization governed? (Board of Commissioners, etc.)*

The Ellwood Board of Fire Commissioners is comprised of 5 publicly elected Commissioners, an appointed Treasurer and an appointed Secretary. The responsibility of the Board is to purchase and maintain the facilities and equipment required to maintain an effective firefighting organization. The Board also sets the policies under which the Ellwood Fire Company operates. The Board is responsible for establishing a budget to meet the needs of the Fire District.

3. *What is your role in this organization?*

I am one of the Commissioners.

### **Planning**

4. *What event or decision got your organization to start the process of buying a generator?*

We needed a larger generator, the one we had was only large enough for some of our emergency systems. Our facility was designated a safe haven in times emergency or disaster. At this time the board decided we needed a generator that would carry the entire building.

5. *When did your detailed planning begin? Should others begin sooner, or later?*

We started two years ago. I suggest starting as soon as possible. Our installation was almost entirely funded with grant monies. Our grant was denied the first try, then we redesigned the installation and applied again. Our second try was successful.

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Originally we were going to install the generator in our rear garage, this was our first preference, the generator would be out of the weather and easily maintained. However we would need combustion air dampers, discharge air dampers, and exhaust piping. This location also required a fairly long conduit and wire run to the main service. Our first request was quite high, \$140,000.00, our grant was denied.

By relocating the generator close to the main service location, and on the roof, we eliminated all the extra work required to place it indoors. This dropped our request to \$90,000.00.

This work was to be done by one electrical contractor, who would use his own sub-contractors.

During the grant process we were asked if we would accept \$50,000.00 for this project, we accepted. Then we decided to become the contractor and hire sub-contractors individually.

Our main object was to find a generator we could purchase on state bid; this is where Better Light & Power came in.

*6. What sorts of people did you involve in the planning – management, other agencies, contractors, consultants? Did that work well?*

I am retired from the electrical industry, with over 40 years of electrical experience. I had the opportunity to be involved in the planning, design and installation of many emergency generators.

This worked very well for our situation.

*7. What turned out to be the main questions about a generator?*

What type of fuel to use, natural gas or diesel.

We found that we had a sufficient supply of natural gas, thus eliminating storage tanks for diesel fuel.



*8. Were you satisfied with the planning, or what would you advise someone else to do differently?*

We were satisfied with our planning, but I would definitely recommend anyone planning an installation should use the services of an electrical engineer.

*9. How did you decide on the size of generator you needed? Is that a good way for others to decide on the size?*

We decided to pick up the entire building load; this eliminates emergency panels, and feeders. This method includes all door operators, heating and air conditioning, radios, siren and circulating pumps etc.

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10. *How did you decide on which generator to buy?*

State purchasing was our first priority.

### **Installation**

11. *What advice do you have on selecting an installer?*

Chose a qualified, licensed electrical contractor that has experience with emergency generators.

12. *Where did you install the generator, and how well did that work out?*

Due to site conditions and proximity to the building service entrance, we installed our generator on our roof.



### **Funding**

13. *How did you find funding for your purchase?*

We applied for a federal grant. We were successful with other grants before, such as air packs, thermal imaging, apparatus exhaust system, computers, and building surveillance cameras. This information is available on the FEMA web site.

14. *What was the process to get approvals for funding?*

One of our board members is a very good grant writer.

15. *Any advice on the funding process?*

Keep trying for those federal grants; otherwise you will have to raise money by taxes.

### **General Advice**

16. *How do you feel about the project now that it is installed?*

We feel we have a very good installation, and saved money on top of that. We were very glad to find Better Light & Power, I would highly recommend them.



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17. *What turned out to be some of the most important decisions you had to make?*

All decisions were important, with all the advice from supplier, contractor and power company, things went very smooth.

18. *Is there anything else that you wish that someone had told you?*

No.

19. *Do you have any suggestions for us, Better Light & Power, about what you liked, and what we could do better?*

Our experience with Better Light & Power could not be any better. Everything was done with extreme satisfaction.

-- R. Q., Fire Commissioner, July 2006



### *Better Light and Power*

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