



Sustainable Energy Tips for Traders



About this fact sheet

The National Caterers Association (NCASS) and Powerful Thinking have prepared this fact sheet for concessions to provide ideas about how to manage energy better, save costs and be ready for changes in the way power is managed and charged for at UK events. NCASS is the UK's leading association for independent catering businesses.

Why power management is important

The UK Festival Industry used in excess of 12million litres of diesel in 2011, and power is often one of the five largest single production costs to an event. Monitoring by the Institute of Energy & Sustainable Development, De Montfort University, shows traders often use a third of total onsite energy at festivals. Due to continually rising fuel costs and a concern for the environment, many festivals are starting to look at the way they manage power in more detail and this will have an inevitable impact on traders.

What are festivals doing to reduce their costs and carbon emissions?

To reduce costs across their events, there are two broad approaches festivals are taking:

- » Reducing demand for power - thus reducing the size and number of generators needed and the amount of fuel consumed.
- » Designing power solutions more efficiently - for example, knowing power requirements more accurately in advance and using smaller generators or hybrid power systems where possible.

What does the future of charging concessions for power at festivals look like?

Some festivals have begun to, or plan to, meter their trader's power, so you only pay for the electricity you actually use. This provides an incentive to traders to reduce power consumption and the opportunity to reduce costs. Many festivals already charge concessions based on the size of the power supply, i.e. 16A, 32A, 3-phase e.t.c, and there have been conversations in the industry to make pricing more aggressive for the larger feeds to encourage reduction in consumption.

Some festivals may start asking for more detailed power consumption information for concessions to help them more accurately assess demand and design systems. For example a list of the equipment you use and their power ratings, and what periods of time you intend to use them, rather than simply asking what size of feed you require. This is because the size of supply you require can often be a very rough measure of what you actually need and when you need it, and the margin for error required on the generators can cause significant fuel wastage.

What can traders do to reduce power consumption?

There are a few simple things that traders can do to reduce power consumption, reduce costs, and prepare to benefit from potential changes in the way concessions are charged for power:

- » Train staff about the importance of reducing power consumption – their actions make a difference.
- » Remember to switch off any equipment when not in use – both electrical and gas for cooking.
- » Consider low energy equipment when making new purchases, or replace equipment when it is cost-effective.
- » Consider types of equipment which require less energy when designing your operation.
- » Replace existing lights with LED lights, which use significantly less power and last much longer.
- » Consider alternative power sources such as solar panels, and hybrid battery storage.

At most festivals traders are required to use the festival power system, and are not permitted to bring their own generators. However many events will permit traders to be self sufficient with solar, wind or hybrid battery storage power. With solar for example, once the equipment is purchased, there are no on-going costs as the fuel is sunlight. If power demand can be reduced to match the output of solar panels, then costs over a season could be significantly less than the charges for power provided by events, or the costs of gas bought onsite.

Case Study: Green Street Catering



Perhaps the most common misconception about sustainability is that it is costly to the business owner, often the opposite is the case. By being efficient with your resources you are in fact saving yourself money and increasing profitability. You wouldn't throw away 15% of your stock as soon as you received it, so why would you do the same with your energy supplies? It makes business sense to be efficient with your use of energy and gas.

In 2011 Tim Spence, of Green Street Catering, realised that the cost of gas was significantly eating into his profits. He produced breakfasts, as well as rare breed burgers and sausages at some of the biggest music festivals and events in the UK. The unit was set up to maximise sales and as such, his wok burners were all turned on to maximum capacity in order to maximise profits during peak times. He realised that his peak periods of the day made up around four or five hours while he was trading for 18 hours a day, therefore the majority of the day he was burning gas - and money - that he didn't need to.

Tim decided to implement the 'just in time' approach for his gas consumption and retrained his staff to ensure that they did not turn on equipment when it wasn't needed. They would only turn on new wok burners when capacity had been reached at the previous burner. This more than halved Tim's gas consumption and his costs but it did not negatively impact his ability to deliver great quality food to his customers. He estimated that he saved £6,000 in one summer, the cost of a pitch at a large festival, just by retraining his staff and setting new standards for them to follow.

Neither gas, electricity or diesel are getting cheaper, quite the opposite, so now is the time to act and be smart with your energy consumption. With many festivals considering metering electricity and others charging up front for electricity based on the size of supply required, astute traders will follow Tim's example and look at ways of reducing their energy consumption and saving themselves money.

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