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## Ahlstrom Thilmany Recognized with 2025 Energy Efficiency Excellence Award

**Kaukauna, Wis.** — [Ahlstrom](#), a global leader in fiber-based specialty materials, and its Thilmany plant, one of Wisconsin's longest running paper manufacturing sites, has been honored with a [2025 Energy Efficiency Excellence Award](#) from [FOCUS ON ENERGY](#)®. The award celebrates the Kaukauna facility's multi-year commitment to smart energy use, process innovation, and community contributions.

Since Ahlstrom's acquisition of the historic Thilmany Mill in 2018, the facility has partnered with Focus on Energy and [Kaukauna Utilities](#) to implement dozens of projects reducing its energy usage while boosting operational efficiency. The results are both impressive and impactful.

Over the past eight years, the plant has saved:

- More than 14.2 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually — **enough to power over 1,700 homes.**
- Nearly 2.5 million therms of natural gas — **equivalent to heating 3,000 homes each winter.**
- A total of 4.4 million MMBtu in energy use — **comparable to removing 4,000+ cars from Wisconsin roads for a year.**

"These savings represent more than just numbers—they reflect how we run our business," said Chris Williams, Ahlstrom Thilmany Plant Manager. "We've made a conscious effort to lead with sustainability and innovation. Energy efficiency isn't a one-time fix—it's part of our culture here in Kaukauna. This recognition belongs to our team, especially Dave Leeder, whose leadership has helped drive continuous improvement across our operations."

Since 2017, Project Engineer Dave Leeder has implemented **67 energy-saving projects across the site**, including full LED lighting conversions, advanced pumping systems, heat recovery, and compressed air improvements. His efforts have set a high bar for legacy manufacturing facilities.

"Ahlstrom Thilmany shows us what's possible when a historic manufacturing site embraces innovation and energy efficiency," said Commissioner Marcus Hawkins of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. "This mill is not only saving energy—it's lowering emissions, supporting local jobs, and proving sustainability and industry can go hand in hand."

Ahlstrom's approach to energy efficiency is closely aligned with its global sustainability goals. The company has pledged to reduce Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions by 42% by 2030 and

reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The Kaukauna facility has invested in an upgraded crepe paper machine utilizing on-site integrated pulp. This process significantly reduces transportation emissions while supporting regional supply chains and the company's overall sustainability goal.

"Focus on Energy is proud to partner with manufacturers like Ahlstrom who lead by example at their mills across Wisconsin," said Erin Soman, Managing Director at Focus on Energy. "Their work in Kaukauna represents the best of what this award stands for – long-term impact, thoughtful planning, and a commitment to Wisconsin's sustainable energy future."

Thilmany is also one of the founding members of Department of Energy's "Better Buildings Better Plants" Program, now with over 300 members nationwide, that signed the pledge to reduce energy intensity by 25% in 10 years.

Beyond the floor, Ahlstrom also supports the community through initiatives like Dyslexia Reading Connections and Outagamie Conservation Club's "Take a Kid Fishing" event. These efforts reflect the company's broader values of accountability, care, and growth.

"At Kaukauna Utilities, we believe in partnering with our customers to use energy efficiently and sustainably," said Michael Avanzi, General Manager at Kaukauna Utilities. "Over the years, no customer has exemplified this better than Ahlstrom's Thilmany Mill. We are proud to be their electric service provider and community partner and applaud them for this remarkable achievement."

The [Energy Efficiency Excellence Awards](#) are presented annually by Focus on Energy, Wisconsin's statewide energy efficiency and renewable energy program, in partnership with utilities across the state.

#### **About Ahlstrom**

Ahlstrom is a global leader in sustainable fiber-based materials used in packaging, construction, healthcare, and industrial applications. Its Kaukauna facility specializes in producing high-performance papers for masking and packaging tapes, as well as food and medical markets. Learn more at [ahlstrom.com](https://www.ahlstrom.com)

#### **About Focus on Energy**

Focus on Energy is Wisconsin's statewide energy efficiency and renewable resource program funded by the state's investor-owned energy utilities and participating municipal and electric cooperative utilities. Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy products. Focus on Energy information, resources, and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed. For more information call 800.762.7077 or visit [focusonenergy.com](https://www.focusonenergy.com).