Federal government sues Maytag

Company accused of violating discrimination laws

By WILLIAM RYBERG
REGISTER BUSINESS WRITER

The federal government is suing Newton-based Maytag Corp., accusing the appliance maker of adopting a can't-teach-old-dogs-new-tricks attitude when it demoted several senior managers older than age 50.

In a lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Chicago, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission alleges Maytag violated federal age discrimination laws when it eliminated 13 of 22 regional sales manager positions in 1999.

Eleven regional managers, including eight over the age of 50, were demoted to newly created positions of zone manager, the lawsuit alleges. Only one employee over 50 kept his regional manager position, the EEOC said.

Maytag denies the allegations and will vigorously defend its "positions and decisions in this matter," said Lynne Dragomier, a Maytag spokeswoman.

If the government wins the case, it could cost Maytag hundreds of thousands of dollars in back pay, benefits and penalties, said Ethan Cohen, an EEOC lawyer. The lawsuit also seeks the workers' reinstatement to their original positions.

The managers oversaw regional sales operations based in Chicago, Minneapolis and other parts of the country. Dragomier said she was not aware of any Iowans among the eight regional managers.

The lawsuit grew out of a complaint filed with the EEOC by Matthew Max, 62, who had been Maytag's regional sales manager based in the Chicago area.

Efforts to negotiate a settlement with Maytag failed,

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875 workers get 2-month notice

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Galesburg, Ill. — Hundreds of workers at Maytag Corp.'s Galesburg plant have officially received notice that their jobs will soon be eliminated.

Maytag delivered a required 60-day termination notice to 875 full-time production workers Wednesday and told them they will be out of a job in mid-September.

About 200 employees will continue working until their jobs are phased out by February 2005, officials said.

Maytag announced in October 2002 that all 1,600 employees at Galesburg Refrigeration Products would lose their jobs by the end of 2004. About 380 workers have already been laid off.

Many helped: More than 30 businesses contributed to the 3,030 square feet of living space for the Alliant Energy PowerHouse in Newton.

Newton 'PowerHouse' uses a lot less

By FRANK VINLUAN
REGISTER BUSINESS WRITER

Newton, Ia. — Five years ago John Trickel's energy-efficiency ideas were little more than notes hurriedly scribbled on a napkin.

On Thursday he unveiled those ideas in the form of a finished home, a "fully loaded" structure with heat-saving walls, energy-efficient appliances and low-flow water fixtures that are projected to use 60 percent less energy than standard homes do.

Trickel, president of Des Moines research and design firm Zero Net, designed the home and joined with Alliant Energy to build it in Newton as an example of energy efficiency.

"We took all the latest energy-efficient technologies on the market today, and some that don't exist on the market today, and built a home around them," Trickel said.

Energy efficiency starts with the walls and roof, Trickel said. Instead of standard wood frame construction, the house uses structural insulated panels made with a foam core. The panel's exterior is made of concrete and glass fiber. Joined together, the panels form an airtight "envelope" around the house that cuts heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer, Trickel said.

Open house

LOCATION: 2900 No. 1 South 12th Ave. W., Newton.

HOURS: 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Beginning July 24, tours will be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and noon to 4 p.m. Sundays.

APPOINTMENTS: Call (319) 551-2768.

INFORMATION: home.powerhousetv.com.

Heat comes from an in-floor radiant system. Tubes circulate hot water that warms the floor, radiating heat throughout the house. The system can isolate rooms to keep them at different temperatures.

Kitchen and bathroom faucets are low-flow fixtures that use less water without sacrificing water pressure. Even the toilets save water.

Before the house took shape, Trickel built a prototype two years ago. To prove the energy efficiency of the construction, he built a 12-foot-by-8-foot building and heated it to 75 degrees during winter with only a 100-watt light bulb.

The first hints of the project emerged in Alliant's energy efficiency plan, approved last

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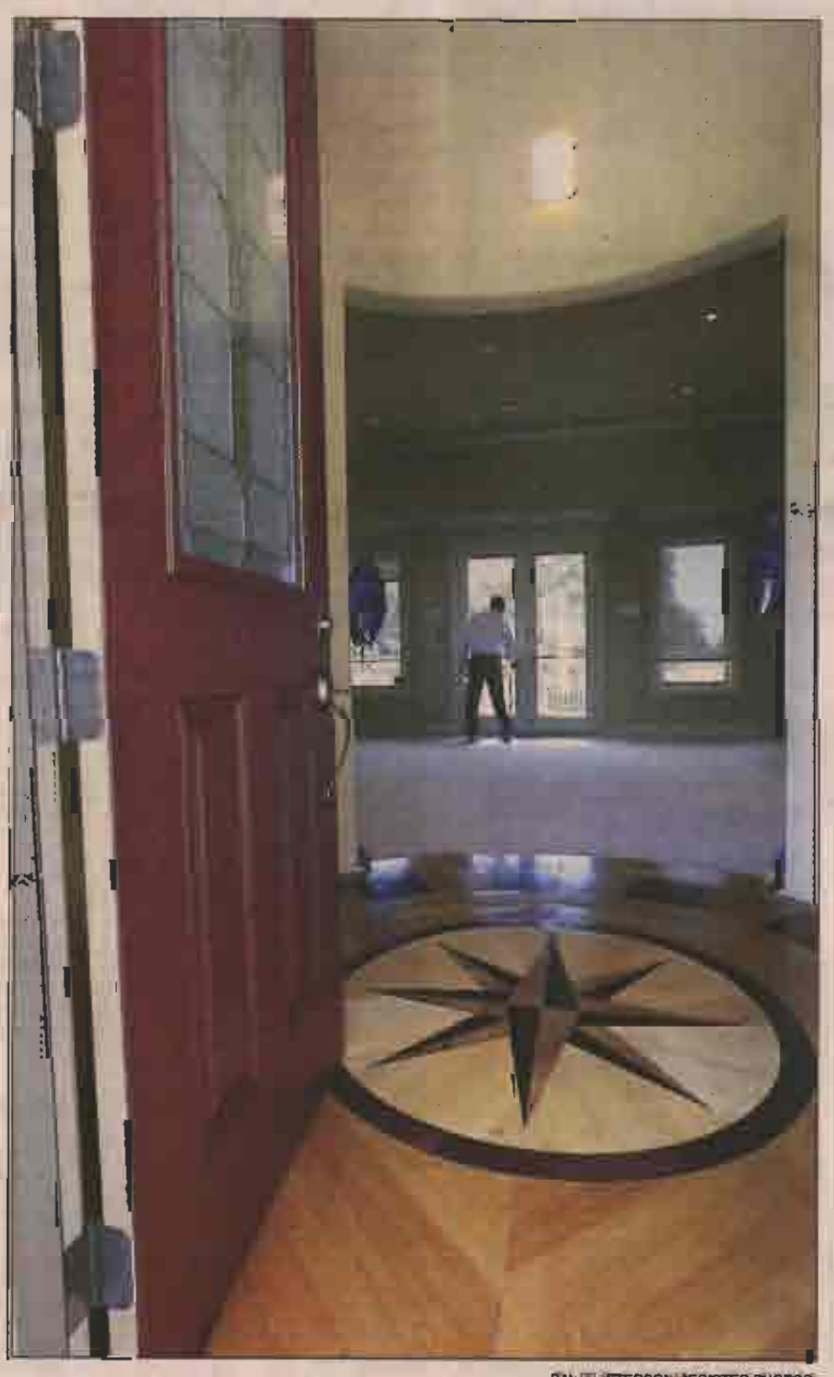

DAVID PETERSON/ REGISTER PHOTOS

Come on in: The entryway of the home features a handcrafted wood floor by Glenn Bauer of Alta, who spent 100 hours on the project.

Lights: Lighting in the house is controlled by a switch plate that can dim lights to use less power.

Toilets: The flush knob on the toilets has two settings — one for a light flush and one for a heavy flush.

Lavatory: The lavatory has a raised, flat center surface that sits flush with the outer edge, and a higher level from which water cascades.

Business venture wins aid in Iowa

Protocol had been promised assistance

The Des Moines Register GC

DAVID PETERSON/ REGISTER

Cool idea: Robin Sempf of Alliant Energy watches as the whirlpool tub in the Newton PowerHouse fills from the ceiling.

New house is model of energy efficiency

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summer by the Iowa Utilities Board. Board member Mark Lambert on Thursday saw for himself what he first saw as a conceptual idea.

"They've basically got every energy-saving bell and whistle you can think of," he said.

Construction began in October and landscaping was finished this week.

Zero Net plans to sell the home later this year. Trickel guesses that the asking price will be more than $400,000, but the house hasn't been appraised. The buyer must allow the Iowa Energy Center to monitor the home's energy use for research. The electric wiring is configured with several fuse boxes, allowing computers to monitor appliances and fixtures separately.

"We're going to know how much energy that washer is pulling down to the load," said Kim King, product manager for Alliant Energy.

The home includes appliances and a water filter from Maytag, as well as a Lennox heating and cooling system.

Trickel, a mechanical engineer and owner of Des Moines architectural and engineering firm VGI Design, founded Zero Net in 2002 to research energy-efficient building designs.

With the custom-built PowerHouse home completed, he said he hopes he can work with a manufacturer to make panels for other homes. For now, he said he's relieved the ideas he's nurtured for years have become a home.

"They say building a new home can be frustrating," Trickel said. "Try throwing out the rule book and starting from scratch."

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