Ice Mountain is a brand of bottled water that is located in Stanwood, Michigan. The products are produced in a 720,000 square foot facility that employs just fewer than 250 people when adjusted for seasonal differences. Ice Mountain prides itself on its low turnover rate of 4-5%. They suggest this is because of the high wages (75th percentile) that they pay all employees.

Ice Mountain is attempting to be “Green” whenever possible during its day-to-day operations. The first way they are doing this is with the plastic used in the bottle itself. The bottles are made of a PET resin, but the company is prototyping non-petroleum-based materials, including some plant-derived products. It is also experimenting in-house with post-consumer recycled resins.

They have also worked very hard on the amount of material in each bottle. They started with 14.5 grams of plastic per bottle, which are blow-molded in-house at Ice Mountain on each bottling line. After a lot of in-house work the current bottle uses just 9.1 grams. The effort saves weight, reduces the amount of post-consumer product that needs to be recycled and the amount that ends up in a landfill.

Ice Mountain is working very hard to reuse whenever possible. They have reduced their waste stream to almost zero and normally the only thing that is left is food scraps. They send the scraps out to a waste-to-energy facility in Grand Rapids.

Engineers have found ways to cut the amount of air used in the blow-molding process. This in turn, reduces the energy lost to heat that would have been used in compressing the air. In 2009, they retrofitted 1,600 light fixtures and installed motion sensors. This saved them about 3.4 million kilowatt-hours annually.

The company also worked with Nestle engineers that are based in Texas, to use waste heat from the blow-molding process to heat the water processing area. The water that was going into the bottles needed to be at room temperature to ensure quality packaging. This is because if the ambient dew point is high, condensation occurs on the outside of the bottles, which can potentially lead to mildew or mold inside the packaging.