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Environmental Management Systems Use Grows Continuously in Industry

Jack Annis

In the last 12 months the Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center has provided detailed technical assistance and guidance to 14 Wisconsin companies pursuing environmental management systems (EMS). Their interest in EMS develops for many reasons including: requirements of their customers to have an EMS; desire to achieve environmental compliance with a myriad of regulations; and perhaps most importantly the desire to implement sustainable manufacturing and business practices that conserve resources and reduce their overall environmental impact.



Evidence of successful companies using EMS is plentiful. The National Performance Track, for example, includes nearly 500 business and other entities nationwide that have collectively reduced their water use by 3.5 billion gallons; conserved more than 14,000 acres of land; increased their use of recycled materials by 135,000 tons; reduced greenhouse gases by more than 97,000 tons, and smog-causing nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide by 6,000 and 17,000 tons respectively. To learn more about the Performance Track members and their results go to:

<http://www.epa.gov/performance-track/>

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources also recognizes the value of EMS as an important and required component of becoming a "Green Tier" certified company. To read more about the Wisconsin Green Tier program; find out who is participating, and what EMS requirements are, go to:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cea/environmental/index.htm>.

EMS is simply a sound business plan that addresses all environmental impacts of a company or entity through a continuous improvement process as depicted below.



SHWEC has the staff and tools available to help companies starting out with EMS or refining their existing program through our on-site assessment visits or simply by using the information available through our web site. Click on the following links for our information on EMS development [Environmental Management System \(EMS\) Manual Template](#) or for the following fact sheets that can help with the two components of an EMS that seem to give most companies trouble. [EMS Development Task 1: Determining Regulatory Requirements](#) and [EMS Development Task 2: Determining Aspects, Impacts, Objectives, Targets](#).

Contact any SHWEC staff for assistance through our web site at www.shwec.uwm.edu

Pilot Programs to Collect Ag Plastic

Joe Van Rossum

The use of plastic film and bags in agricultural applications continues to grow. The most recognizable use is in the form of "ag-bags" used to store animal feed. These single use bags look like giant white worms and contain between 300 and 500 pounds of film plastic. The bags present a number of waste management challenges including open burning. The plastic is difficult to recycle as it is often covered with mud and feed residuals.

Since early 2007 an ad-hoc group, composed of representatives from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Dept. of Agriculture Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP), University of Wisconsin Extension, and The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA), has been investigating options to improve how farmers manage this waste stream. In September, the group hosted a booth at The 2007 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days to educate farmers about the proper disposal of this material. The booth resulted in contact being made with a Minnesota plastic recycler, Advanced Granulating Systems Inc. (AGSI).

AGSI has agreed to participate in a pilot collection program, and work continues to establish the first pilot ag plastic collection sites in Wisconsin. Currently the group is working with interested parties in Adams, Columbia, Dane and Green counties to establish pilot collection points. The pilot locations will deal with getting the plastic from farms to collection points where it can be baled for shipping to AGSI's processing facility in Minnesota.

For more information about this program please contact Joe Van Rossum, 608-262-0936, or Kate Cooper, DNR (608-267-3133). Additional information about AG plastic is available from Cornell University online at: <http://environmentalrisk.cornell.edu/AgPlastics/>

New Tool-Kit and Webinar Available from Curbside Values Partnership

Joe Van Rossum

The Curbside Values Program (CVP) has announced the availability of two new resources for local recycling program managers looking to increase participation. The "Recycling Communicators Toolbox" was introduced at the National Recycling Congress in Denver is available online and in CD-ROM format. CVP has worked with over 40 communities to boost recycling program participation. The tool-kit includes best practices, research findings, how to use public relations, measuring success and other topics.

Also new from CVP is an on-demand webinar entitled "A Crash Course on Education: An Online Tutorial for Recycling Coordinators." The one-hour program features a discussion of cost effective and creative waste to improve any recycling education program. The program features Charlotte Pitt from the City of Denver who discusses the steps Denver has taken to educate residents about recycling. The topics and methods discussed are intended to be easily implemented on the local level.

The Tool-kit and Webinar can be found on "Tools You Can Use" section of the CVP website: www.recyclecurbside.org/. Site registration is required to gain access to the tools and some of the other resources available from CVP.



Madison Area Residents Recycle Their One Millionth Pound of Electronics

The 15th and last semi-annual recycling round-up for computers, televisions, and consumer electronics, hosted by the City of Madison, Dane County, the Madison PC Users Group and Cascade Asset Management held Saturday, November 17, received over 126,000 pounds of computer equipment, television and cell phones.

In the past seven years, more than 1,064,600 pounds of consumer electronics have been collected from the public and recycled. Because computer equipment contains hazardous materials such as lead, mercury and cadmium, it is important to keep these items out of landfills.

Statistics from the event:

- Number of households participating: over 1,275 households
- Total weight of all items received: more than 126,000 lbs.
- Total number of monitors and laptop computers: 1,375
- Total number of televisions: 240
- Number of cars unloaded per minute: 5.3 cars
- Amount of lead kept out of landfills because of Saturday's event: more than 5,325 lbs.

This was the last semi-annual recycling round-up. The City of Madison will now be providing residents with two year-round drop-off sites. For more information please visit the City's website at www.cityofmadison.com/streets. Cascade also accepts items from businesses for recycling throughout the year. More information is available at www.cascade-assets.com or by calling (608) 222-4800.

Environmental News Briefs of Interest

To Learn How to Better Protect the Environment - Ask EPA

If you could sit down to chat with the nation's top environmental officials, what would you ask? EPA recently launched a new online interactive forum *Ask EPA*. In this forum, patterned after Ask the White House, the public will have the opportunity to ask the agency's senior environmental officials questions on a wide range of environmental and human health issues. The live chat sessions will last approximately one hour and consist of 8-12 questions and answers. Individuals can submit questions up to two days in advance, as well as during the live discussion. For more information or to receive email alerts on upcoming hosts and topics, visit the Ask EPA site (<http://www.epa.gov/askepa>).

Green Scene Podcasts - Environmental Discussions on the Go

Green Scene podcasts are another way to get information and explore environmental issues with EPA's top experts. Through EPA's latest downloadable tool, Agency officials discuss how EPA is helping protect our nation's environment while providing the public with useful tips and information on how they can make a difference in their communities. The discussions will take place biweekly and run roughly five minutes in length. The Green Scene Podcast box is located near the top of the EPA home page (<http://www.epa.gov>) In addition; all discussions are archived and posted at: <http://www.epa.gov/newsroom/greenscene>

New Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Web Site Available



EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing team has redesigned EPA's EPP Web site! The redesign provides clear and easy access to policy and guidance designed for federal purchasers but the site also contains information for anyone interested in Green Purchasing; information on specific products and services; tools and calculators; publications and case studies; and related Web links. In order to ease navigation and provide the most up to date information, different parts of the EPP Web site were added, revised, moved, and archived. If you are having trouble finding an EPP resource on the redesigned site, please check the index on the EPP page at

<http://www.epa.gov/epp/>.

Next Generation of Energy Star Computers

Since the stringent new requirements for Energy Star computers became effective in July, more than 35 manufacturers have demonstrated their commitment to fight climate change by offering products that save energy. These newly qualified computers offer significant savings opportunities at home and in businesses.

The new specification establishes efficiency requirements for all modes of operation, which ensures energy savings when a computer is active and running basic applications, as well as when it is on stand-by. Newly qualified computers must also include an internal power supply that is at least 80 percent efficient. Under the new specification, only the most energy-efficient computer equipment, including desktop and notebook (or laptop) computers, game consoles, integrated computer systems, desktop-derived servers and workstations, can earn the Energy Star label. Under the new specification, manufacturers must display the Energy Star label on the product and its packaging, in product literature, and on Web sites to clearly indicate which products meet the new specification. Qualified product listings can also be found on Energy Star's Web site at: http://www.energystar.gov/find_a_product and click on "Computers".

Polluters Will Spend Record \$10.6 Billion on Environmental Controls and Cleanup

The U.S. EPA enforcement program achieved the largest ever results in fiscal year 2007. Industries, government agencies and other regulated entities agreed to spend a record \$10.6 billion in pollution controls and environmental projects, exceeding the previous record of \$10.2 billion set in 2005. Over the last five years, EPA's enforcement program has sustained a steady track record of pollution reductions and commitments from regulated entities to install pollution controls. Since 2003, EPA's enforcement activities have required companies to invest over \$33 billion in pollution control equipment to achieve pollution reductions of nearly 4.5 billion pounds.

For more information go to EPA's fiscal year 2007 enforcement and compliance results at: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/data/results/annual/fy2007.html>

Events, Training, Workshop and Tour Opportunities

December 5, 2007, **ECO-SUMMIT CONFERENCE 2007**, Saint Norbert College-DePere WI- Sign up at http://www.greanbiz.com/eco_07.htm

December 11, 2007, **FET Hazardous Waste Training Seminar**, Liberty Hall, 800 Eisenhower Dr, Kimberly, WI Registration Due: Tuesday, December 4, 2007 at <http://www.fetinc.org/> or call 414-354-0070

February 9-12, 2008 **The US Composting Council's 16th Annual Conference and Tradeshow**, Oakland, California. Registration online at: <http://www.compostingcouncil.org/index.cfm>

February 27-29, 2008 the **2008 Winter Solid Waste And Recycling Conference** is sponsored by AROW, SWANA and WCSWMA in Oshkosh. To register call 608-339-9178 or download the brochure at: <http://www.arow-online.org/PDF/2008%20Conference%20Schedule-Flier.pdf>