

The Green Team
Increasing Internal Awareness of Recycling and Energy Conservation
NCSHA 2009 AWARDS
Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

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Category: Management Innovation
Sub-Category: Operations
Entry Name: Green Team

“Please consider the environment before printing this email”

BACKGROUND

In an effort to increase recycling awareness the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development created a Green Team that is responsible for overseeing recycling and energy conservation efforts throughout its facilities. Since the creation of the Green Team there has been a substantial increase in the quantity and types of items being recycled. For example, members of the team have taken the initiative to research various avenues in order to determine where certain items not included in the State recycling contract can be recycled (i.e. Styrofoam, batteries, cell phones, plastic grocery bags, light bulbs/tubes, toner cartridges, and cardboard). Because team members are so excited about the department’s efforts to recycle, they have even volunteered to take items not being recycled under the State contract and personally transport them to various recycling locations. These efforts have helped the Department cut its weekly waste disposal from 83 tons to 41 tons which equates to a pick up of once a week versus twice week.

The Green Team also has been working with local recycling offices from the surrounding counties to assist with the promotion of “Going Green” at home and work by having the counties do onsite distribution of bins and handouts.

As part of the energy conservation efforts the Green Team is promoting energy reduction by reminding staff to turn off lights in offices, file/conference rooms when not in use, to close blinds in order to allow the HVAC to run more efficiently and to turn off computers/monitors and printers at the end of each day. These reminders are being done via email (tips and hints), posters displayed throughout the building and light switch covers. In addition many of the employees use a signature footnote to remind people to, “Please consider the environment before printing this email.” The Department purchases and leases energy efficient appliances and equipment (including copiers) in order to save energy where ever possible.

On another note, the Green Team ensures that hazardous chemicals (i.e., paint) are disposed of properly so they do not end up in the landfill. The team emphasizes the Reuse, Rethink, and Recycle philosophy which encourages employees to make available office supplies that they no longer need or want so that other employees can utilize them.

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Additionally, in conjunction with the State's efforts to reduce solid waste in landfills, DHCD participates in the e-cycling program where surplus electronic and metal items are recycled and/or reused. The State's contractor CDM E-cycle assesses and classifies the material into two different categories: reusable or recyclable. Reusable equipment is sent to qualified technicians who perform testing, repairing and upgrading required to make the items marketable again. Equipment is classified recyclable when it is deemed outdated for reuse and/or beyond repair. Recyclable equipment is sent to a dismantling facility where it is manually separated and sorted into various groupings to maximize the final recovery of raw materials.

DHCD's fleet department is conscientious in ensuring that a fuel efficient vehicle (flex-fuel/hybrid) is procured during each vehicle procurement cycle as defined by the State Department of Budget and Management Fleet Administration. As part of a federal initiative, DHCD is purchasing four energy efficient vehicles that will be used by the Weatherization Team while conducting site visits.

The Green Team provides a monthly update on its efforts at the DHCD's All Hands Meeting, which is a great opportunity to share information and tips with the staff. Such updates also are posted on the Department's intranet and distributed to other building tenants. In addition, the Green Team's enthusiasm also prompted the coordination of a t-shirt drive to promote the team's motto "Recycling is Everybody's Job."

Going forward, the Green Team will look for additional items to be recycled and ways to improve the Department's overall carbon footprint.

The Green Team is a Management Innovation that showcases employee leadership in protecting the environment through recycling and energy conservation.