



PORTLAND
VA MEDICAL CENTER

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FALL 2011

GEMS Newsletter



A Message From the GEMS Coordinator

Summer is over and fall has arrived. The leaves are beautiful, aren't they? The Committee has been busy this summer getting new members, wrapping up FY2011 and coming up with our goals for FY2012.

This year, we will be working on composting, reducing solid waste, as well as pollution prevention. This year's focus will include expanding our recycling programs and eliminating waste in the first place. We will be examining food donation programs, catheter recycling, and public recycling containers. There is a lot to do and you can help!

Please check out our new [GEMS SharePoint site](#), which has lots of information and upcoming events. Coming soon is a pollution prevention survey that we will ask you to participate in and tell us

what you are doing as a department or at home to reduce pollution.

One final note is environmental compliance. The GEMS program is often misunderstood to be all about recycling. Actually it was formed because of violations and citations received by the VA across the nation. This program has helped reduce violations by Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) immensely. If you have any questions about GEMS, how to dispose of a product, chemicals, what to order, or sustainability, don't hesitate to call me. Thanks for all you do.

Happy Holidays!

Wendy Trapp
GEMS Coordinator

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If you are interested in becoming a GEMS Committee Member, please contact Wendy Trapp at ext.55417 or email: wendy.trapp@va.gov



ENERGY PROGRAM UPDATE

Energy Reduction Goals:

- ♦ Reduce consumption of electricity and natural gas by 3% a year or a 30% improvement by FY 2015, using the FY 2003 baseline.
- ♦ Reducing potable water consumption intensity 2% annually through FY 2020, or 26% by the end of FY 2020, relative to a FY 2007 baseline.
- ♦ 7.5% energy use from renewable sources by 2013.
- ♦ All buildings have advanced electric metering by 2012. Completed!
- ♦ Non-electric advanced metering (natural gas, steam, water, etc.) by 2015. Meters to be installed and will be operational by early next year.

PVAMC Current Status:

- ♦ Electricity in KWH: FY 03, Base Year-24,846,171. FY 10-25,916,946. FY 11 Estimate-25,869,549.
- ♦ Natural Gas in CF: FY 03, Base Year-134,475,900. FY 10-129,647,735. FY 11 Estimate-132,173,149.
- ♦ Water in 1000 Gallons: FY 07, Base Year-42,272. FY 10-32,496. FY 11 Estimate-29,585.

Achieving Our Goals

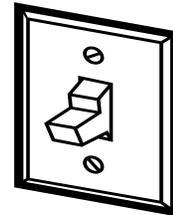
- ♦ Energy Savings Performance Contract (Portland): An energy services company incurs the cost of implementing an energy project and is paid from the operations savings resulting from the project.

- ♦ Utility Energy Services Contract (Vancouver): An agreement with a “serving” utility to finance and install an energy project.
- ♦ Agency-funded Project (NRM Program, Portland & Vancouver): Funds have been designated for the outright development and construction of a project.
- ♦ Employee Awareness: Orientation Energy Awareness DVD; Lunch-n-Learn, All Staffs, and Town Halls; Earth Week; Energy Awareness Month; and Eposts.

What You Can Do To Help

Employees should be involved in energy conservation on many levels at work and home. Lead by example with Smart Energy Choices!

- ♦ Carpool, bike or use mass transit when commuting to work.
- ♦ Switch off all unnecessary lights using light from windows or desk lamps instead of lighting the entire room.
- ♦ Use Energy Star appliances, turn down refrigerators and turn off appliances not in use.
- ♦ Dress appropriately for the season eliminating the use of space heaters.
- ♦ Turn off faucets, minimize water flow and report leaks immediately.
- ♦ Turn off computer monitors and office equipment.
- ♦ Take the stairs. Annual savings in elevator energy use can be equal to the energy used to power seven homes!



Submitted by Ron Higgins, Energy Manager.

Autumn has arrived and it's time to rake those leaves!

Take advantage of what many call "Gardener's Gold". Leaves provide us with so much value throughout the year and we often overlook their gifts. In spring, they are the harbinger of a new life cycle. Their broad thick foliage provides wildlife and humans with shelter from the heat in the summer giving opportunity to languish outside in the long days of summer. When autumn arrives, they provide us with such dramatic beauty as their leaves change from green to a splendor of oranges, reds and golds. Once they fall from the trees we as gardeners can take advantage of their gifts again by turning these leaves into our very own ground cover.

You will indeed need to get outside and do a bit of work but you will find with a little effort you have some of the best mulch and compost out there and it won't cost you a dime. Rake up your leaves to keep your perennials and grass from rotting underneath. If your trees have large leaves, you will need to chop or shred the leaves in order to speed up decomposition. I am fortunate enough to have a 100-year-old Black Locust in my back yard. The leaves are no larger than 2 inches so I can skip this step! Your lawn mower will do this job for you either before you rake or after. You will have to turn your pile out a bit to get to all the leaves chopped.

At this stage, you can either spread them around the base of trees, bushes and shrubs as mulch or you can put them in a compost bin or pile. There are plenty of options out there for everyone. Small and large for every need whether you want to build your own or buy one readymade. You will need to turn your piles every few months over the next 2 years to aid the decomposing process. My favorite is the 3-compartment bin. You can transfer your piles from one to the next as the leaves decompose.

Of course, if you want to make the best compost you can for your yard and garden needs, you will want to be sure get a good balance of carbon and nitrogen rich materials. What does that mean? The short version is: leaves, non-glossy paper, straw, wood and bark all provide the carbon; grass, plant clippings, uncooked fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds and egg shells all provide nitrogen.

There is a ton of information out there on the web about composting as well at your public library. I encourage all of you to use your own plant waste at home and turn it into "Gardener's Gold." Everything you have at home is exactly what you get when you buy compost, "leaf gro", etc at garden centers. Why not make your own free!

I find reusing organic materials such as leaves for mulch and compost to be one of the most satisfying aspects of my gardening. I hope you will try it.



Submitted by: Karie Galvin, GEMS Member



Greening the Government

What is Healthier for the Environment is Healthier for You Too!

You see them every day. Some are small, some are large, some short, and others tall. Some are made of wood, still others of concrete and glass. They provide us shelter and comfort, a place to rest, a place to work, a place to heal, and a place to gather. They are the homes, churches, offices, stores, hotels, hospitals, restaurants...the buildings of our society. And, according to recent findings by the EPA, Americans spend 90% of their lives inside these spaces, inside buildings.¹

Healthy Environment, Healthy You

With so much time spent indoors, the buildings we inhabit play a large role in our personal health and well-being. Just as buildings play a direct role in our health and well-being as individuals and occupants of interior spaces, our methods of building construction and facility management affect the health of our environment. In 2005, buildings in the United States accounted for nearly 40% of total energy consumption, 72% of total electricity use, and 38.9% of carbon dioxide emissions.² These statistics are projected to increase by 2025.

Greening the Government

In October 2010, the United States General Services Administration (GSA) responded to this data by committing all federal buildings approved for construction or serious renovation from 2011 forward to meet a minimum of LEED Gold certification standards for federally owned property and LEED Silver certification standards for leased space.³ LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a holistic building approach, guided by evidence based research that focuses on more than energy efficiency. To earn LEED certification,⁴ projects must accumulate a specific num-

ber of credits in five areas: sustainability, water efficiency, energy & atmosphere, materials & resources, and indoor environmental quality. Together, these credit areas guide construction and renovation projects that meet a 'triple bottom line' benefit: conserving environmental resources, improving the health of building occupants and the environment, and saving taxpayer money.

Seeing Change

At the Portland VA Medical Center and our affiliated CBOCs, we already have projects in the design process that will meet LEED Gold (our new Emergency Department building) and LEED Silver Certification standards (our new Bend CBOC). Within our Portland campus, the 8D Ward Remodel showcases a combined commitment to LEED and Planetree.⁵ The remodel accentuates the use of natural daylight to light the ward, energy efficient lighting, zero VOC paint, plank flooring that has the look of natural wood but does not require harsh chemicals to clean or stripping and waxing to maintain, and furniture sourced from post-consumer recycled goods.



Greening the Government (Continued)

Across the hall in 8C, the Eye Clinic remodel features a flooring product called Mar-moleum MCT in place of vinyl or carpet that you may be seeing installed in your own service area. The product 'off-gasses'⁶ omega-3 fatty acids that actually promote health, and at the end of its life cycle, MCT is completely biodegradable.

These are just a small sampling of the measures your Facilities Management Department at the Portland Medical Center is taking toward creating environments that promote human health and healing in tandem with good environmental stewardship. If you would like more information about these projects or other ways the Portland VA Medical Center is 'going green', please contact your local GEMS team via the SharePoint.

Melisse Kuhn, VA Interior Designer



¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, epa.gov/greenbuilding/pubs/gbstats.pdf

² U.S. Green Building Council, usgbc.org

³ "US Federal Buildings after 2011 Required to Be LEED Gold Certified", constructiondigital.com/news_archive/tags/2010-elections/us-federal-buildings-after-2011-required-be-leed-gold-certified

⁴ LEED for Commercial Interiors, usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=8874

⁵ Planetree is a 'humanistic' and evidence-based approach to healthcare design whereby the built environment directly enhances patient health and healing. In combination with LEED, these programs direct design that meets enhanced human and environmental health. You can learn more about Planetree at planetree.org.

⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outgassing

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Advantages: *Performance*—Well-designed electric vehicles can travel at the same speeds as conventional vehicles. *Zero tailpipe emissions*—no internal combustion means no exhaust. *No refueling*—Plug your vehicle into an outlet and walk-away. Return 3-8 hours later to a fully charged vehicle or wait as little as 15 minutes for an 80% charge using a quick charger. *Lower Maintenance Cost*—routine maintenance costs less than conventional vehicles because the vehicle has fewer moving parts.

Disadvantages: *Range*—Driving range is less than 150 miles per charge, making an electric vehicle perfect for a campus maintenance truck, but not so great for a road trip. *Initial investment*—Buyers pay a higher upfront cost to purchase an electric vehicle, due to the expensive battery pack.

Electric vehicles are currently most suitable for a limited range of applications. However, as technology develops and manufacturing evolves, these ultra-green/zero-emission vehicles will likely become more practical for a wider range of applications.



Energy Word Search

W	E	H	M	E	T	E	R	I	N	G	U	D	J	E
P	S	J	E	E	N	I	X	U	G	Y	M	M	N	L
M	A	S	H	E	A	L	T	H	C	A	R	E	X	E
W	G	R	E	W	O	P	S	N	I	G	D	A	N	C
O	E	R	B	C	H	C	E	N	M	B	S	V	U	T
H	G	C	I	N	C	I	N	N	A	T	I	N	P	R
S	R	O	D	O	C	U	J	R	I	R	O	T	R	I
E	S	A	V	I	N	G	S	S	O	I	E	E	O	C
D	T	O	F	E	K	J	X	N	T	M	T	T	J	R
A	G	F	C	U	N	V	M	A	F	L	A	H	E	O
R	E	T	A	W	D	E	L	L	I	H	C	E	C	V
T	Y	A	W	C	N	U	R	F	M	L	T	R	T	G
O	U	F	Q	T	S	M	E	G	N	U	Q	M	E	N
A	D	V	A	N	C	E	D	W	Y	J	G	A	U	D
E	L	L	I	V	E	T	T	E	Y	A	F	L	Q	M

ADVANCED
 AIR
 CHILLED WATER
 CINCINNATI
 DATA
 EFFICIENCY
 ELECTRIC
 ENERGY
 ENVIRONMENTAL
 EXHIBITOR
 FAYETTEVILLE
 FCU
 FILTER

GAS
 GEMS
 GOVENERGY
 GREEN
 HEALTHCARE
 INSULATION
 METERING
 ODOR
 POWER
 PROJECT
 SAVINGS
 SUCCESS
 TEAM

THERMAL
 TRADESHOW
 VETERANS

Provided By: VHA Energy Education & Training Committee

GEMS Tid Bits

- ✓ The DEA's third National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on October 29th turned in more than 188.5 tons of unwanted or expired medications for safe and proper disposal at the 5,327 take-back sites in all 50 states and U.S. territories.

Congress passed legislation amending the Controlled Substances Act to allow the DEA to develop a permanent process for people to safely and conveniently dispose of their prescription drugs. After President Obama signed the Safe and Secure Drug Disposal Act of 2010 on October 12th, DEA immediately began developing regulations for a more permanent solution.

The DEA's Take-Back events are a significant piece of the White House's prescription drug abuse prevention strategy. Other action items include education of health care providers, patients, parents, and youth; establishing prescription drug monitoring programs in all states and increased enforcement to address "doctor shopping" and pill mills.

GEMS will announce the next Prescription Drug Take-Back.

- ✓ Pharmacy Service has a new Drug Take Back Program for patients. See the outpatient Pharmacy in Portland, Vancouver, or any Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) for details and envelopes.
- ✓ Save paper by using MyPay to view your Earning & Leave Slip! Choose to turn off hard copy of LES. Go to:
<https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>
- ✓ Clean Energy Works Oregon:
<http://www.cleanenergyworksoregon.org/>

Want some more green?
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