



PORTLAND  
VAMC

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SUMMER 2013

# GEMS Newsletter



GEMS Coordinator

## *A Message From the GEMS Coordinator*

We are in the heat of summer but it is going fast. Already seeing back to school items in the store. Hold up, more summer please!

Hope you are enjoying your summer and getting outside to do the things you love, camping, hiking, swimming, boating, concerts, and farmer's markets. See Page 5 for some great information about these low impact summer activities.

The GEMS Committee finished collection of 100% of significant environmental aspects/impacts from each department. Also, Earth Week was a huge success. See Earth Week results on Page 2.

The Committee has also been in compliance mode, working with auditors and preparing for joint commission as well as com-

pleting year end reports and looking at target and objectives for next year A new hazardous drugs policy has been created to help staff better protect themselves from their exposure to such medications. The policy is available on the facilities hospital safety manual under the [environmental and industrial hygiene section](#).

Finally, join us on the VA Skywalk from 11a.m.-1p.m. on Sept. 10, for the end of the fiscal year office swap as supplies run low.

Thanks to all of you for the extra time and commitment you take to protect the environment. Our Portland GEMS program is one of the best in the Country and we should be proud!

Wendy Trapp

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Have GEMS questions, contact  
Wendy Trapp  
Extension 55417



## Earth Week- Results

### April 22 was Earth Day.....

Recycled approximately 500lbs of office supplies during the office swap!

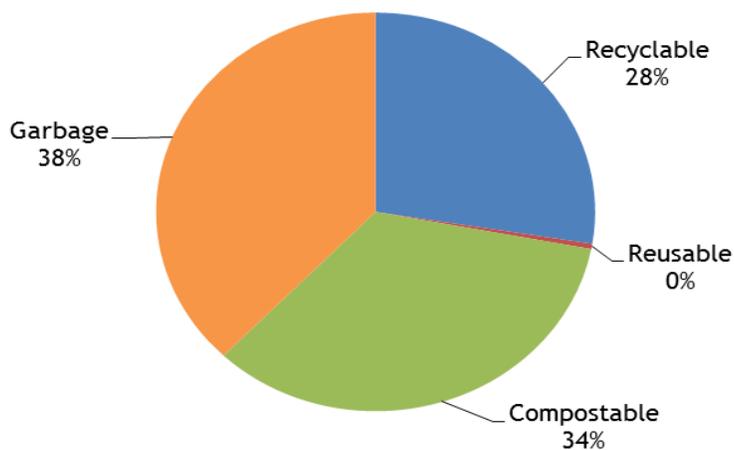
Recycled 97 pairs of shoes for our recycled shoe collection

Had 20 vendors attend our sustainability fair on the sky bridge

Recycled Art Workshop

Participated in a Waste Sort with an outside vendor. See results below

**Figure 1: Garbage Composition by Weight**





Angela Loo, Pharmacy, Travis Peake, Facilities Management, Jenika Schindlbeck, industrial Hygienist, Wendy Trapp, GEMS Coordinator Christian Weidler, Facilities Management, and Richard Huegli



Jenika Schindlbeck, Industrial Hygienist



Travis Peake, Facilities Management

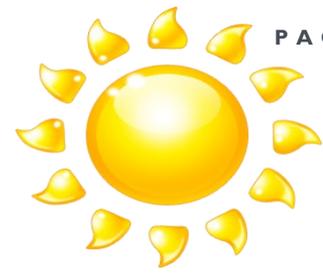


## Summer Energy Savings



- Placing lamps or TV sets near your room air-conditioning thermostat can cause the air conditioner to run longer than necessary because the thermostat senses heat from the appliances. Set them apart and save energy.
- Lighting makes up about 10 percent of home energy costs. Save up to 75 percent of that energy by replacing incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). They also last longer, saving money on replacements.
- Running your air conditioning at 78°F instead of 72°F can save between 6 and 18 percent on your cooling bill.
- 
- Well-planned landscaping isn't just for aesthetics -- properly placed trees around the house can save between \$100 and \$250 annually.
- On average, households lose about 20 percent of their heated and cooled air through the duct system to the outside. To avoid wasting energy, have your ducts inspected to ensure they're sealed properly and insulated if necessary.
- If you use air conditioning, a ceiling fan will allow you to raise the thermostat setting about 4°F with no reduction in comfort.
- Heating water can account for 14 to 25 percent of the energy consumed in your home. Turn down the temperature of your water heater to the warm setting (120°F) and save energy (and avoid a surprise faucet-scalding).
- By using the microwave, toaster or a counter-top grill rather than an oven, you'll use less energy and avoid excess heat that increases room temperature.
- Leaving a computer on all day can cost about 21 cents per day, or about \$75 per year. Unplug electronics and appliances when not in use – a task made easier by using multiple-outlet strips, which can turn everything off with the flip of a switch.
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***By Ron Higgins, using  
Excerpts from Energy.Gov***



## Low Impact Summer Activities

Take mass transit or bike, instead of car.

Where can you go? Almost anywhere. You can use [Tri-Met trip planner](#). Or try this website for a great bike tips and map for a safe biking experience. <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/70221>

Hiking? Check out this website! <http://www.portlandhikersfieldguide.org/>

Camping? Find a [campground](#) near you!



By

## Thinking about making green choices?

*Here's some interesting info. to help you make your choice.*

### **Why not eat less Meat?**

If you are planning on cutting back your water usage, eating less meat is a good way to start: about 634 gallons of water are used to produce just one hamburger, according to the EPA. Last year, HuffPost's Lynne Peeples reported that a 2011 report "estimates that if each American cuts meat and cheese from their diet for one day a week it would be equivalent to taking 7.6 million cars off the road." Consider doing it once a week, if an all vegetarian lifestyle is not right for you. In addition, consider buying meats from grass-fed, free-range farms that ascribe to a higher standard of living for their animals.

### **Drink From A Reusable Mug**

Did you know that, according to the [Clean Air Council](#), American office workers use about 500 disposable cups per person every year? Imagine how much we could save if everyone used re-usable mugs as opposed to disposables.

### **Think before you buy**

Go online to find new or gently used secondhand products. Check out garage sales, thrift stores, and consignment shops for clothing and other everyday items. When making purchases, make sure you know what's "Good Stuff" and what isn't.

### **Borrow instead of buying**

Borrow from libraries instead of buying personal books and movies. Consider sharing power tools and other appliances.

### **Re-use fashion**

Americans make room for the new by discarding some 2m tons of the old every year, which goes into landfill. YouGov poll found that there are an amazing 2.4bn pieces of clothing unworn for an entire 12 months (many possibly brand new) cluttering up the national wardrobe, which adds up to \$10bn-worth of stockpiled fashion. This needs to be redistributed via a system of clothes swap parties and targeted donations before it is chucked in landfill.

### **Make your own cleaning supplies**

The big secret: you can make very effective, non-toxic cleaning products whenever you need them. All you need are a few simple ingredients like baking soda, vinegar, lemon, and soap. Making your own cleaning products saves money, time, and packaging-not to mention your indoor air quality. Check out this link to find out how. <http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=1400>

*By: Travis Peake, FMS Budget Technician and Wendy Trapp, GEMS Coordinator*

## How do I recycle?



### Styrofoam (block)

Recology (<http://www.recologyoregonmaterialrecovery.com/index.htm>)

Far West Fibers (<http://www.farwestfibers.com/>)

### Styrofoam (packing peanuts)

The UPS Store

**Electronics:** As of Jan. 1, 2010, computers, monitors, televisions and laptops are banned from landfill disposal in Oregon. Most places will accept up to seven laptops, monitors, computers, or televisions for drop off.

Goodwill (<http://locator.goodwill.org/>)

Salvation Army ([www.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org))

FreeGeek (<http://www.freegeek.org/>)

### Fluorescent Lights:

Ikea

Lowe's

Home Depot

### Batteries:

Whole Foods

Radioshack (rechargeable, must weigh less than 11 pounds)

### Paints:

(Most paint retailers will accept household paint that is less than 5 gallons)

Sherman Williams

Rodda Paint

Miller Paint

### Plastic bags:

Most grocery stores have a bin located near the entrance that accepts clean plastic bags.

Fred Meyer

Safeway

Whole Foods



*By, Jessica Robb, Research Assistant*