

Pollution prevention efforts recognized

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Pollution prevention efforts save greenbacks—and more

Efforts to refurbish used gas containers, perform wildfire-related work in the winter, and recycle thousands of lead bricks were among projects winning awards at the 2012 Los Alamos National Laboratory's annual P2 Awards ceremony.

All told, the employee ideas allowed the Lab to save or avoid using more than 100,000 reams of paper, 3,000 chemical containers, 9,000 kilowatt hours of electricity, 50 million gallons of fuel, and 80 tons of metal.

In addition, environmental-related projects enabled LANL to recycle more than 5 million liters of water and reduce the amount of hazardous and radioactive waste generated by Lab operations by more than 2,500 cubic meters.

The employees' pollution prevention efforts offered other benefits as well. Organizing and decluttering work spaces made them safer places to work. Many of the initiatives helped the Laboratory avoid potential environmental compliance liabilities. Reusing and recycling items reduced the Laboratory's overall space footprint. In addition, the Laboratory now uses fewer natural resources, such as fuel, energy, and chemicals, in its operations.

Symbolic seventeen million dollar check represents more than just savings

In recognition of these accomplishments, Los Alamos National Laboratory Director Charlie McMillan was presented with a symbolic check for \$17 million, the amount of money this year's projects are estimated to have saved the organization.

"The mantra of 'reduce, reuse, recycle' was incredibly evident in our employees' accomplishments," said Laboratory Deputy Director Beth Sellers. "It's such a win-win. Using less energy, water, and materials is great for our environment. At the same time, it helps us because conserving resources and cutting down on waste saves money. It was a very powerful statement that we had 450 lab staff participate in the program this year."

A sampling of the award-winning ideas and projects

Dewars done right

Workers at the Laboratory's Gas Facility contracted with a commercial company to refurbish used containers of pressurized gases, or dewars, instead of disposing of them. So far, this has saved \$450,000 in purchase costs, and the Laboratory estimates it will save more than \$1.5 million after all of the containers have been refurbished.

Leaving nothing but footprints

In a more ecologically-friendly approach to managing wildfire mitigation activities, the Laboratory performed wildfire prevention work during the winter instead of spring and summer. This practice allowed workers to avoid disturbing sensitive habitats during mating and nesting seasons, reduced erosion from minimizing soil disturbance, and used the expertise of trained wildland firefighters during their off-season. The effort allowed Lab resources to be used more wisely and helped protect local wildlife.

No more bricks in the wall

Lead bricks and shielding materials from decades-past experiments posed a health and environment hazard and occupied much-needed work space. A cross-organizational team recycled approximately 55,000 pounds of lead, eliminating the possibility of a lead exposure or environmental mishap.

In recognition for its overall excellence in "green purchasing," the Laboratory also received a national award from the U.S. Department of Energy this year. DOE awarded the Laboratory a bronze award in its Greenbuy Program, which honors DOE sites that make purchases that help save energy, conserve water, and reduce health and environmental impacts.

“It is just great to see the Lab-wide commitment to the environment,” said Alison Dorries, Environmental Protection Division Leader. “We’re proud of our science and we’re proud of our stewardship as well.”

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