

Healing Our People . . . Our Planet

Catholic Healthcare West's Environmental Commitment

Editor's Note: We provide these documents as examples of what one of our members has done with regard to environmental responsibility

This document has been edited to accommodate the newsletter's online format. For a complete version, contact Sr. Mary Ellen Leciejewski, at MaryEllen.Leciejewski@chw.edu.

At Catholic Healthcare West (CHW), we recognize the interdependence between human health and the environment we live in. Global warming and the pollution of our air, water and soil are pervasive problems in our world. What we do today to preserve our planet will impact our patients' health and well-being now and in the future for their children and grandchildren.

Creating a Healthy Environment

Our mission is to be part of the solution, advocating for practices that protect our environment. After all, ecology comes from the Greek word "oikos," meaning home. The planet is our home and as members of the Earth community, we must revere its gifts — energy, water, material and land — using them efficiently and avoiding waste.

For more than a decade, CHW has woven environmental programs and processes into the work we do every day. From big to small, our efforts have impacted our organization and our planet in a positive way.

As leaders in helping to change the healthcare industry's impact on the environment, we continue to share our best practices and we encourage others to join us in this important work.

Designing Efficient Buildings

CHW seeks to create a healing environment while minimizing the environmental impact of all our building projects. From the aesthetic to the practical, our construction teams pay attention to indoor air quality, light, noise, temperature and humidity. Our contractors collaborate with us

to use materials, technologies and processes that limit the negative impact on the environment whenever possible.

We're also improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gases created by our existing facilities. Since 2001, we've identified and implemented specific projects aimed at reducing energy and water consumption. We estimate that our efforts in these facilities will reduce electric consumption by 64M kWh (16%) and natural gas consumption by 119K MMBtu (7%).

Marian Medical Center in Santa Maria, Calif., for example, has installed a state-of-the-art system of transforming methane gas waste from the local landfill into "green" energy in a process called cogeneration. Not only will this process fuel and power the hospital, it will significantly reduce methane emissions into the environment. The system also offsets the use of other resources, such as coal, natural gas and oil, while saving the hospital \$225,000-\$345,000 annually in energy costs.

Conserving Water

We require all our facilities to keep track of water usage. Our data indicates that an average facility uses 25-35 million gallons of water each year.

We've reduced water consumption in a variety of ways. Old heating and cooling equipment and steam traps have been retrofitted to become more efficient. At some facilities, we use drip irrigation in our landscaping and plants that require less water to thrive.

We've implemented water saving technology in our X-ray film developing process. This program is expected to save more than 140 million gallons of water annually, about 90 percent of the water currently used for X-ray production. We've also introduced digital X-ray technology in many of our facilities, meaning that film and chemical processing is eliminated. We've reduced the costs associated with chemical maintenance, hazardous material handling and dark-

rooms and the water savings are more than 100,000 gallons per processor each year.

We continue to promote water conservation efforts and train our staff to be more energy efficient in their daily work.

Reducing Our Waste

Looking for a plastic container? A used computer? Furniture? Saint Francis Memorial Hospital in San Francisco is one of six CHW hospitals that operates reusable stores, offering used hospital items for employees and community members. Items no longer needed by the hospital are offered free in an effort to save them from a landfill.

Hospital waste is a serious problem. Hospitals nationwide generate some 6,600 tons of waste daily, according to Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E). About 85 percent is non-hazardous solid waste - paper, plastic, food, cardboard, metal and glass. That gives hospitals plenty of recycling opportunities.

We reduce our overall waste through a variety of programs. Some items can be recycled. Other items are sterilized and reused. In fiscal year 2006, CHW diverted 88 tons of medical waste by reprocessing items and conserving resources, without putting our patients or employees at risk.

Overall, we've reduced the amount of waste by 23 percent since 2000 and have maintained our current usage levels for three years. We consider this a practical goal for waste reduction given the current hospital environment, but continue to look for ways to improve.

Reusable stores are just one of the many programs we've developed to reuse and recycle common hospital items. Here are descriptions of other efforts:

Blue Wrap

Each year CHW purchases about 200,000 pounds of blue wrap, a polypropylene material used frequently in hospital operations. We're working with the California Integrated Waste Management Board to develop a blue wrap recycling program statewide. If this recycling program is a success, it could potentially reduce landfill waste by millions of pounds.

Construction Debris

CHW constantly renovates existing facilities and builds new ones. We work with our contractors to ensure that much of our waste is recycled. We recycle steel studs, aluminum, copper and cardboard. Old concrete is crushed and used as backfill. And we are using recycled building materials when possible.

Electronic Waste

In 2006, we established a program to manage electronic waste, primarily computers. We've protected our data to comply with federal, state and local regulations. And we're working with our vendors to safely dispose of electronic equipment, thus reducing the amount of electronic equipment in foreign landfills.

Nourishing Our Bodies

When it comes to hospital fare, patients and employees at Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz eat right. The hospital serves fresh, organic fruits and vegetables supplied by the local Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA), an organization that helps small, novice farmers prosper.

Organic food offers healthier choices than those found in most vending machines. Our purchases of organic food from local growers also support economies in the communities we serve.

As Americans struggle to control diabetes and obesity brought on by unhealthy food choices and a lack of exercise, CHW aspires to create a healthier food system.

We define healthy food not only by its nutritional quality, but also by where it comes from. We look for food systems to be economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

CHW has signed the Health Care Without Harm healthy food pledge to continue to achieve environmentally-friendly food service and supplies. We've also developed our own vision to promote healthy food and discourage waste, while working with producers and processors who uphold the dignity of farmers and workers in their communities.

Eliminating Hazardous Chemicals

From premature babies to the elderly, hospitalized patients often receive life-sustaining fluids and medication through IV bags. Historically, IV bags have been made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a plastic used in many medical devices.

We have been working to reduce our use of this material for several important reasons. The cancer-causing agent dioxin can be formed during the manufacture of PVC or during the burning of PVC products. The chemical DEHP, used to soften the PVC plastic, also has been linked to birth defects and other illnesses.

By fiscal year 2006, we phased out most PVC/DEHP IV products, using IV bags produced by B. Braun Medical, Inc., which do not contain those chemicals. This is just one example of how CHW has worked with manufacturers to create products that are safer for patients and healthier for the environment.

We've also removed all significant amounts of the poisonous heavy metal mercury from our facilities and instituted purchasing policies to ensure no new mercury is introduced.

Tracking Greenhouse Gases

Greenhouse gases trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to global warming. Some occur naturally, but others are generated solely through what we do as humans.

Tracking greenhouse gases gives us information on activities that contribute to climate change.

CHW is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We're participating in the California Climate Action Registry, a voluntary program that helps companies calculate and certify greenhouse gas emissions. We're currently tracking carbon dioxide from a variety of sources, including our cars and trucks, diesel generators, direct heating, cooling and electricity use.

Through these measurements, we plan to identify the sources of our emissions and how we might work to reduce the greenhouse gases we create.

Advocating for Change

CHW's mission is to advocate for change, both within our

industry and globally, that improves the quality of life. We continually ask ourselves and others how we can balance both moral and strategic issues in how we do business.

Part of the solution is to question the status quo. Much of our progress has first involved facing the challenges of steering our own organization to providing services in a safer, healthier way.

We've taken our best practices and worked in partnership with others to impact public policy on the state and national levels.

Our advocacy helped create the California Climate Action Registry, a non-profit voluntary registry that tracks greenhouse gas emissions. CHW was the first healthcare organization in California to participate in the Registry.

CHW has also successfully advocated for the passage of several bills in California that protect both the environment and consumers. In particular, we advocated for the Safe Cosmetics bill, which strengthens consumer protections regarding chemicals in cosmetics, and for the passage of a bill requiring that child care products and toys designed for children under the age of three be free of toxic chemicals called phthalates. And because there are large gaps in understanding the effects of environmental contaminants on human health, CHW was proud to support the passage of the Biomonitoring bill, which established a formal mechanism for measuring toxic chemicals in people.

We continue to help advance the debate with local, national and international partners on the development of a comprehensive chemical policy.

We've put a lot of effort into our push for change, but we acknowledge our work has just begun. We believe it's everyone's duty — as individuals and as members of organizations — to promote optimal health while caring for our planet.

Recognizing Our Environmental Efforts

CHW is a recognized leader nationwide in environmental performance. In 2007, Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E) awarded CHW, for the sixth year in a row, the Champions of Change Award, honoring our environmental leadership in the hospital industry.

CHW in 2006 received more than 19 additional awards for a wide range of environmental programs, setting the industry standard, and many of our hospitals have individually been honored for their environmental efforts.

In 2007, H2E honored CHW hospitals in California with the following:

Partners in Change Award — to Mercy Medical Center in Redding, Sequoia Hospital in Redwood City and St. Bernardine Medical Center in San Bernardino for mercury elimination, waste reduction and pollution prevention programs.

Making Medicine Mercury Free Award — to Mercy General Hospital in Sacramento and St. Bernardine Medical Center in San Bernardino for meeting the challenge of becoming a mercury-free facility.

H2E Environmental Leadership Circle — Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz and St. Joseph's Medical Center in Stockton were inducted into this prestigious circle for their ongoing efforts to create environmentally-responsible healthcare programs.

Restoring Our Planet

At CHW, our environmental program is a key part of our healthcare ministry. As we provide our patients with excellent care and our employees with a healthy and safe working environment, so too do we strive to treat our planet.

The work to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us and to collaborate and partner with others to share our best practices is ongoing and urgent. We'll continue to explore processes that help us protect our resources, make us more efficient and cost effective, and improve the health of our patients and our planet.

For more information about CHW's environmental commitment, please contact Sister Mary Ellen Leciejewski (maryellen.leciejewski@chw.edu).

To learn more about Catholic Healthcare West visit us at www.chwhealth.org/ecology.