



Newsletter

Environmental Connection

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DEQ Employees Put the Brakes on Driving Alone

Roughly one-third of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) work force made a commitment on Earth Day to drastically cut air pollution by carpooling or taking alternative transportation to get to the office.

In doing so, DEQ employees collectively reduced air pollution in a single day about the equivalent of the emissions an average automobile produces in six months.

And the evidence was in the nearly empty parking lots.



"I'm impressed but not surprised," said Rick Sprott, executive director of DEQ. "Our employees are dedicated to improving the environment. They put into action what they preach."

Sprott challenged employees to Choose Clean Air by ditching their vehicles for a day or riding in with a friend. Commuters were treated to bagels and Sprott sweetened the stakes with a competition between the three DEQ buildings. Building 1, where Division of Air Quality and Drinking Water are located, won the contest due to 51 dedicated souls who participated in the challenge. The majority of them carpoled or rode the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) bus.

For some, it's a matter of habit. Almost daily, Brandon Smart, webmaster for DEQ, commutes from Ogden to Salt Lake by bus. "When I ride the bus I come to work less stress than when I drive," he said.

Jeff Studenka, an environmental scientist for Water Quality, was one of the biggest cheerleaders in the group by gently persuading his co-workers to participate.

“I felt it was not only a fun way for DEQ employees to participate and compete,” Studenka said, “but also to help set an example to others who may now be considering reducing their carbon footprint as well.”



Although the Cannon Health Building, where the Division of Water Quality and Solid and Hazardous Waste, didn't win it drew a close second to winning the prize – a 'Fat Boy' ice cream treat to be delivered by Sprott and Deputy Director Bill Sinclair. Over half of the 46 participants who commuted to the Cannon building rode the bus.

As for Building 2, where the administration offices and the Division of Environmental Response and Remediation and Division of Radiation Control are located, about half of the 39 employees who participated came to the office by bus or carpooled. However, some also rode their bikes or scooter to

work.

“Trip reduction is something we want all employees to practice,” Sprott said, “every day, not just on Earth Day.”

Pilot Project to Shed Light on Proper Disposal of CFLs: Six Ace Hardware Stores will Take Burned-out Bulbs

We're all encouraged to use energy-efficient compact fluorescent lights. CFLs use less energy than incandescent bulbs and last 10 times longer. But when the mercury-infused bulbs burn out, consumers are in the dark on where to take them.

Not any more. Starting in May, six Ace Hardware stores in Utah will offer consumers free disposal of their spent fluorescent lights and mercury-containing thermostats as part of a pilot project funded by a nearly \$50,000 grant from Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Region 8 Office in Denver.

EPA, the Product Stewardship Institute and the Women's Voices for the Environment have partnered with a select number of Ace Hardware stores in Utah, Montana, and South Dakota to serve as a free collection point that encourages all fluorescent-light users to drop off spent tubes – free – at selected stores.

In Utah, the six participating Ace Hardware store locations are:

Salt Lake City: 3939 Wastach and 612 East 400 South
St. George: 160 N. Bluff Street

Cedar City: 165 South Main Street
North Salt Lake: 1075 North 500 East
Tremonton: 250 East Main Street

CFLs are such super-efficient lights that Congress ended its 2007 session by passing an energy bill encouraging their use. Utah Governor Jon Huntsman switched to CFLs in his mansion and strongly encouraged all state agencies to do the same.

The dark side to all of this, of course, is the disposal issue.

Fluorescent lights contain very small amounts of mercury – an average of 5 milligrams, roughly the equivalent to the amount of ink on the tip of a ballpoint pen. Mercury also is a neurotoxin, particularly harmful to developing fetuses and children.

“Recycling helps keep it out of the environment,” said Rusty Lundberg, branch manager with the Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste. “All the collected lights and thermostats from this pilot project will be sent to out-of-state recyclers.”

The free disposal is limited to residents; businesses are not allowed to participate. Due to safety reasons, no broken lights will be accepted.

Stay Tuned: What to Do with All the Old TVs

As the nation switches to Digital TV in February 2009, there’s a growing concern among many that millions of old analog TVs could end up in the trash.

“Recycling is the best option,” said Rusty Lundberg, branch manager with the Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste. “But unfortunately the options here in Utah are limited.”

Consumers can either ship their old television sets or other electronics to the manufacturer, many of which have an ‘Electronics Take Back’ program that usually requires you to pay the cost of shipping or take it to one of three Utah companies that will recycle it for a price: GRX Recycling in Clearfield, Stone Castle Recycling in Ogden and SFI Computer Recycling in Spring City.

The least desired option, said Lundberg, is the landfill. “TVs contain toxic components such as lead, cadmium and mercury.” The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that each cathode ray tube television, most of which are analog, contains 4 to 8 pounds of lead.

Brad Mertz, director of Recycling Coalition of Utah, admits there are few options locally. “I think it will be a concern,” he said. “But we want to continue to work with agencies, such as the Department of Environmental Quality to provide periodic free drop off locations for locals.” Last fall, DEQ and RCU sponsored a free drop off day that DEQ paid to have it recycled.

There’s always the chance that people with analog televisions – the old TVs that work on antennas – will purchase a converter box. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration is offering \$40 coupons that can be used to purchase converter boxes but consumer must use them within 90 days of receipt. For more information on the coupons, visit www.dtv2009.gov. Those who currently own a TV with a digital tuner or subscribe to a satellite or cable TV service are not affected by next year’s transition. More information can also be obtained at www.dtv.gov.

Lundberg predicts that many people will simply go and buy a new TV. "This holiday shopping season could see a rush on new TVs," he said. And that could potentially mean that unwanted TVs will end up in the trash.

On Feb. 17, 2009, all U.S. television stations will cease their analog broadcasts in favor of a digital signal in order to provide a clearer picture and free up the airwaves for emergency responders.

Some manufacturers have pledged to take back old televisions for free and recycle them. Sony Inc. has partnered with Waste Management to establish collection sites in many states, including Utah. Some electronic outlets like Staples will take old computer monitors no matter what brand.

Other states, such as Washington, have passed producer responsibility laws requiring companies to subsidize the collection and recycling of TV sets, while other states are considering such laws.

The Utah Legislature has considered various bills that range from banning e-waste in landfills by 2007 to simply providing public information about the issue – all without success of passage.

Lundberg, however, is hopeful that the growing awareness of e-waste will prompt more meaningful solutions. "I think many manufacturers are trying to design their electronics to be more recycle friendly that allows them to be dismantled much easier," he said. "European nations have strong requirements on the amount of toxic components that are in electronics prompting many manufacturers to design electronics with less toxic components."

Tap Into Water Week: May 4-10

Although water may be sparse at times in Utah's desert state, there won't be a shortage of activities to celebrate the importance of it during the first week of May.

The second annual Water Week, co-sponsored by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), runs from May 4-10. It will have Utah communities wading in a pond of activities that range from water fairs and golf tournaments to film festivals and brown bag lectures.

"We are trying to make Water Week attractive for people of all ages with local activities that are fun as well as educational," said Alane Boyd, executive director of the Intermountain Section of the American Water Works Association (AWWA), which has pledged to spend \$20,000 on educational materials and advertising to promote this year's events.

State water agencies and organizations have helped raise the money and are providing opportunities for the public to participate in events that also include library displays and tours of treatment facilities. [Click here for a list of events](#)

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will highlight water during "Bring Your Child to Work Day," on Tuesday, May 6. At 9:30 a.m. Professor Scatterbrains, otherwise known as Rita Stevenson, the elementary science supervisor for Davis School District, will entertain and educate kids with fun and wacky water experiments. The Living Planet Aquarium's Water Van also will be on hand.

For the more serious minded, DEQ will sponsor a brown bag seminar from noon to 1 p.m. Thursday, May 8 by presenting the documentary "Running Dry," a film based on the former Illinois Senator Paul

Simon's 1998 book, "Tapped Out," which warns the public that the planet is facing a water shortage and contamination. Water experts will be on hand to facilitate discussion afterwards.

"We are excited to help facilitate discussions about water, which is vital to all of us," said Rick Sprott, executive director of DEQ.

Simon's widow, Patricia, will be in Utah to participate in a discussion of "Running Dry" at the Park City Library, 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 6 at the Park City Library and at the Broadway Cinemas, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 7. And, on Thursday, the documentary Sundance film, "Flow for the Love of Water," will be shown at 7 p.m. at the Post Theater at Fort Douglas on the University of Utah Campus.

Last year, Governor Huntsman signed into a law a bill that created "Utah State Water Week," that sets aside the first week of May aimed at promoting a better understanding about the varied issues surrounding water.

"This year, we have had a lot more involvement throughout the state," said Boyd. "There are activities from Layton to St. George. Next year, we hope to build on it by getting more schools involved, particularly the middle and high schools, through a Water Art and Education Program."