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Hexcel captures annual NWCAA Platinum award

Skagit facility manufactures lightweight products for aerospace firms

BURLINGTON – [Hexcel](#) makes lightweight materials at its sprawling plant near the Skagit Regional Airport, including some that reduce the noise of jet engines.

And it does so while using a variety of techniques to limit and reduce the facility's air emissions and energy use.

Hexcel is the winner of the annual Platinum award for the [Northwest Clean Air Agency's](#) Partners for Clean Air program. The Platinum award is the agency's top honor for work that businesses and organizations do to protect and improve air quality.

Hexcel has 23 plants around the world. Its aerospace clients include Boeing, Airbus and Gulfstream. The Burlington plant, which opened in 1990, continues to grow and expects to have about 350 workers in the next few months.

Environmental stewardship is a key part of Hexcel's culture, said Tim Wyer, the Burlington facility's environmental health and safety manager.

"It's just the right thing to do," Wyer said.

Hexcel is a leading supplier of carbon fiber, honeycomb and other composite materials for the commercial aerospace industry.

"Our products are used by customers to save weight, which reduces fuel consumption and helps to reduce carbon emissions. Some of our products reduce noise pollution while others help to produce clean and renewable energy," according to the company. "Whether the goal is to reduce fuel consumption or engine noise, or to enable alternative energy sources to be more efficient, Hexcel composites are a vital component in the process."

The company's Partners for Clean Air award application says, "Hexcel tracks greenhouse gas emissions and has active programs in place to reduce its carbon footprint. For example, our 'Energy Tigers' program has resulted in significant reductions in energy consumption and associated carbon emissions. The Energy Tiger team is an employee task force within the Hexcel supply chain group that develops plans to significantly reduce Hexcel's energy use and overall costs. This team created an online 'toolbox' for plant managers and others to share their ideas and successes in improving energy efficiency. In addition, whenever we build new or expand existing operations, we invest in the latest available technology to help reduce and control emissions."

Workers at the Burlington plant use 21 large cutting machines to shape their products from

carbon fiber and aluminum.

"Everything we do has dust – none of the dust we produce here goes outside," Wyer said. "Everything we grind or cut on has some kind of control for dust."

He pointed out aluminum products in one of the plant's warehouses. "It all produces aluminum dust, and we recycle all of that."

In addition to the cutting machines, Hexcel uses controls to limit emissions to the outside air from 11 large ovens to vacuum bond and heat set products. The plant also has four large freezers for storing unused materials.

The plant converted all its warehouse lights to boost energy efficiency, Wyer said.

Partners for Clean Air awards

Northwest Clean Air Agency started presenting its Partners for Clean Air awards annually to businesses and organizations in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties in 2010. Three levels are awarded: Platinum, Gold, and Silver. This year, a total of 48 emissions sources registered with NWCAA received awards.

The agency selects the Platinum winner as the stand-out business among the Gold award winners. Hexcel representatives received a plaque and recognition at the NWCAA board of directors meeting on March 8.

To win Gold, businesses must comply with all applicable air quality regulations for at least three years and employ additional clean air practices in at least two of these categories: energy efficiency; emissions reductions; air pollution prevention practices related to their specific business sector; and transportation, such as reducing commute trips, having no-idling policies and switching to cleaner vehicle fleets.

Details about the 2018 Gold winners' clean air efforts are available on the NWCAA [business recognition web page](#). The winners are:

- [Bellingham Professional Finishes](#), Bellingham
- [CDI Custom Design Inc.](#), Bellingham
- [Chemtrade Sulex Inc.](#), Mount Vernon
- [Dally's Auto Body](#), Mount Vernon
- [Maple Leaf Auto Body](#), Lynden
- [Nature's Path Foods](#), Blaine
- [North Hill Resources](#), Burlington
- [Sugiyo USA Inc.](#), Anacortes

A list of Silver award winners is also available on the NWCAA [business recognition web page](#).

The Northwest Clean Air Agency is responsible for enforcing federal, state and local air quality regulations in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. In addition to permitting and regulating industrial sources of air pollution, the agency provides services and information related to asbestos, indoor air quality, outdoor burning, wood stoves, and fireplaces. More information about the agency is available at www.nwcleanairwa.gov.