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NWCAA awards Tony's Coffee top air quality honor

For the people who work at Tony's Coffee, clean air is part of producing a quality product and a natural consequence of loving where they live.

"We make a lot of our business decisions and select the equipment we buy because we really do want to take care of the environment and create sustainability," said Andrew Bowman, Tony's Director of Coffee.

The Northwest Clean Air Agency selected Tony's Coffee in Bellingham to receive this year's [Partners for Clean Air](#) Platinum award for its outstanding efforts to reduce air emissions from onsite operations and shipping.

"It starts with where the product comes from," Bowman said. "We like to support farmers who use sustainable and organic growing practices. Ultimately, we think that effects the quality of the coffee. Generally, people who use those kinds of practices aren't taking shortcuts."

And when it comes to protecting air quality, Tony's isn't taking shortcuts either. Here are the highlights of Tony's efforts:

- **Energy efficiency:** Invested in high-efficiency lighting throughout its facility. In addition to seeing a significant decrease in energy bills, Bowman says the quality of the lighting is much better. The company also buys 100 percent renewable energy.
- **Emissions reductions:** Ships 90 percent of its raw coffee beans, or green coffees, into the Port of Seattle instead of the Port of Oakland, reducing the miles trucks must travel to supply the Bellingham roaster. For the benefit of neighboring noses, the company uses an afterburner system, called a thermal oxidizer, that burns off odors and smoke. Bowman doesn't like that it uses a lot of natural gas to run it, so he hopes to upgrade to something more efficient as the technology improves.
- **Sector specific:** Reduced waste to nearly zero. Coffee sacks are donated to local gardeners. Packaging is recyclable and compostable when possible. Expired coffee is donated to soup kitchens and food banks.
- **Transportation:** Converted its delivery fleet from box trucks to fuel-efficient Sprinter vans that use diesel and biodiesel fuels.

Bowman thinks the company's efforts to go beyond complying with air quality regulations stems, in part, from employees' collective environmental ethic and love of the outdoors.

"We tend to attract a lot of people who care about riding their bikes instead of driving when they can, and we have a lot of hikers, kayakers, skiers, and snowboarders who work here," he said. "It's part of growing up in the Bellingham culture. You love it so much that you really want to take care of it."

Award presentation and information

NWCAA will present Tony's Coffee with a plaque during the agency's [Board of Directors meeting](#) at 1:30 p.m. on March 12.

Partners for Clean Air awards have been presented annually to businesses in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties since 2010. There are three levels awarded: Platinum, Gold, and Silver. This year, 31 of the 389 businesses registered with NWCAA received awards.

NWCAA selects the Platinum winner as the stand-out business among the Gold award winners.

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 [Gold winners' clean air efforts](#) are available on the NWCAA business recognition Web page.

The 2015 Gold winners are:

- Chemtrade Sulex, Mount Vernon
- Island Hospital, Anacortes
- Lakeside Industries Belleville Asphalt Plant, Burlington
- North Hill Resources, Burlington
- Rothenbuhler Engineering, Sedro Woolley
- Trident Seafoods, Anacortes
- CDI Custom Design, Bellingham
- Granite Construction Singer Asphalt Plant, Everson

To achieve Silver status, businesses must demonstrate 100 percent compliance with air quality regulations for at least three years. This year, [18 businesses](#) received the Silver award.

“We like to see businesses competing to be the best at protecting air quality,” said Mark Asmundson, NWCAA’s Executive Director. “Their efforts help protect the air we breathe, and demonstrate that looking out for the environment is also good for business.”

More information:

- **NWCAA Partners for Clean Air awards**, including more detail about award winners’ efforts, and a list of Silver winners: www.nwcleanair.org/aqPrograms/busInfo_pg4.htm
- **Northwest Clean Air Agency:** Website – www.nwcleanair.org, Facebook – [nwcleanair](https://www.facebook.com/nwcleanair), Twitter - [@nwcleanair](https://twitter.com/nwcleanair)

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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 offers information and services related to asbestos, climate change, indoor air quality, outdoor burning, woodstoves, and fireplaces. More information about the agency is available at www.nwcleanair.org.