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Partners for Clean Air business recognition – Platinum

The Platinum award is the Northwest Clean Air Agency's top honor for businesses. The Platinum winner stands out for clean air practices in the four categories used to evaluate applicants for Gold level recognition: Energy efficiency; emissions reductions; air pollution prevention practices related to their specific business sector; and transportation, such as commute trip reduction, no idle policies and cleaner fleets.

The 2012-13 Platinum award goes to PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center in Bellingham. Here are highlights of the hospital's exceptional efforts to improve and protect air quality in our region:

Energy efficiency

- Improvements to hospital heating and cooling systems, including installation of variable control on a primary chilled-water unit and heating-water pumps, reducing energy demand and pump horsepower.
- Installation of occupancy sensors to reduce fan horsepower during periods of inactivity in surgery, surgery prep and central sterilization areas.
- Lighting and lighting control upgrades inside the hospital and parking garage. Reduced redundant exterior lighting fixtures.
- Measurable cost savings to date through energy conservation: \$681,000. Ongoing avoided cost: \$165,000. Energy reduction: More than 7,000 MMBTUs (million British thermal units) per year.

Emissions reductions

- Effective Sept. 30, 2011 PeaceHealth St. Joseph discontinued use of ethylene oxide in the sterilization of surgical tools and devices, eliminating its emission through rooftop exhaust. PeaceHealth St. Joseph now uses a more environmentally friendly vaporized hydrogen peroxide process.
- Electronic devices are recycled through a certified recycler to prevent shipment overseas where electronic boards may be burned, releasing toxic gases into the atmosphere.
- Recycling plastic film to prevent incineration with other waste.
- Sustainable landscape practices, including: Reduced mowing by replacing turf with a native garden and allowing grass to grow longer before mowing it; increased use of organic fertilizer in place of synthetic fertilizer; and minimized use of broadleaf herbicide in favor of mechanical weed removal.
- Favoring use of cleaning and disinfection products that release fewer irritating vapors.

Industry/sector specific practices

- Elimination of mercury from all clinical tools by replacing older equipment, including blood pressure monitors, thermometers and pharmacology practices. Replaced fluorescent lighting with low mercury lamps. The lamps are recycled properly to prevent mercury vapor release.
- Working with suppliers to reduce packaging.
- Aggressive recycling program for cardboard, aluminum cans, plastic bottles and glass containers.

- Purchasing food service paper products that contain recycled and chlorine-free materials.

Transportation

- Active promoter of staff participation in Whatcom Smart Trips, offering incentives for use of transportation other than driving alone to work. Biking, walking, carpooling or riding the bus a minimum of 10 times a month qualifies staff for a \$2-per-day reimbursement. PeaceHealth St. Joseph offers bus riders the choice of a free bus pass instead of the incentive.