

Suggested “Green” Best Practices for County Health Departments

First Steps:

1. Form a volunteer “green team” to perform outreach and create your strategies. Membership should be comprised of at least one member of each section or bureau and several people who have authority to make department-wide changes. The team should meet at least monthly, preferably bi-weekly.
2. Have your team evaluate this plan and plans from other counties to get ideas. Orange and Sarasota counties have such a plan. You may contact David Overfield for more information in Orange and Chuck Henry in Sarasota.
3. Prioritize the list of actions using the categories: “things we can do now” “things we would like to do” and “things which we can’t presently do.”
4. Set out to accomplish the things on the first list to take care of the “low hanging fruit.”
5. Devise a plan to achieve those things on the “things we would like to do” list. Assign specific tasks to each team member.
6. Evaluate whether each task can realistically be accomplished. Those which cannot, move to the third list.
7. Continue to meet and review all three lists, creating steps for accomplishing your goals and putting off goals which require policy or legislative change. You should not give up on those goals, but make a long-term plan to undertake them.

Suggested Tasks

- Organize recycling of office paper and cardboard.
- Recycle bottles and aluminum cans.
- (If you do not have curbside pick up, create a rotation of team members to collect and take the materials to the landfill or a local Wal-Mart which has a large bin.)
- Collect used batteries. These can be disposed of at landfills. Most have a hazardous waste collection program.
- Recycle compact fluorescent light bulbs. These need to be placed in a yogurt or other plastic tub with a lid to prevent them from breaking and releasing mercury. They can be taken to the local hazardous waste facility.
- Recycle unwanted cell phones by collecting them and taking them to the local battered woman’s shelter or other charity.
- Make a “take it or leave it” area in your break room or other common area. People can bring useful unwanted items and leave them there and others who can use them can take them. This area will need to be cleared once a

month. The unwanted items can be taken to Goodwill or some other charity. Items left on the table in Central Office include working appliances, magazines, three ring binders, children's toys and canned goods.

- Collect used printer cartridges. Have a paint “round up” day where staff brings unused paint. Folks can take paint they can use and the rest can be taken to the hazardous waste collection site.
- Put up a bulletin board for items and services to barter, sell or give away. Items which are too big for the take it or leave it table like stereo equipment and baby furniture are examples. Unwanted pets are another suggestion. It is easier than you expect to get someone to “adopt” your unneeded items!
- Use your break room bulletin board to look for a car pool buddy, or sign up for the local car pool matching service provided by DOT (usually called commuter services, varies by location).
- Influence the purchase of hybrid vehicles for your office.
- Ask (or write into the contract) that the office custodians use all “green” cleaning products.
- Ask staff members to contribute unwanted dishes and silverware to keep in the break room to be shared. This will cut down on the amount of paper plates and plastic silverware consumed.
- Participate in or hold a symposium or summit on a green-related issue like the health effects of climate change.
- Provide each employee with a reusable coffee mug and water bottle. Or, have people donate these items and distribute them to staff.
- Find out how much electricity and water each of your locations is consuming. Post that amount in a prominent place where employees will see it and challenge them to decrease usage by:
 - i. Shutting off their computers using a power brick every night;
 - ii. Not employing any accessory items like refrigerators, space heaters, fans and radios;
 - iii. Turning off lights when they leave the room or installing motion sensitive light switches;
 - iv. Turning off screen savers;
- Provide information to employees on things they can do to reduce their carbon footprint at home.
- Install low flow toilets, waterless urinals and timed faucets in the bathrooms.
- Turn off lights in rooms with sufficient daylight.
- Set all printers and copiers to go into “powersave” mode after 3 minutes.
- Calculate your agency's carbon footprint using an online tool and track your progress every month. (for example: climatefriendly.com or carboncounter.org)
- Implement 4-10 work schedules. This would save on power and vehicle operating costs.

- Provide employees the opportunity to work from home. Encourage them by calculating how much money they would save. Create a baseline to track your progress by performing an employee transportation survey.
- Encourage employees to take alternative transportation instead of using one car, one person. Provide bus passes to those who use public transit.
- Provide covered, locking bike racks.
- Provide public bikes for employees who wish to exercise at lunch or use the bike for errands.
- Provide showers to encourage employees to walk or exercise during breaks.
- Create a green newsletter for employees once a month to encourage green practices. It could include items like where to recycle, how to be green at home, tips on organic and rain gardening, and other sustainable practices.

Please call Sandra Whitehead at Central Office if you have questions or would like personal assistance. She can be reached at 850-245-4250.