

Breaking the Throwaway Cycle

Buying the latest, the newest, and getting rid of the “old” ...whether it’s cars, electronic devices or dinner plates, the U.S. leads the world in consumption of goods as well as their disposal. This urge to buy, discard and buy again has been part of our culture for a long time. This throwaway mentality results in a rapidly growing stream of trash (“solid waste”) that needs to be managed. In Connecticut alone, we generated over 3.8 million tons of solid waste in 2005.

So how do we break this cycle? The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently completed a 20-year statewide plan that will serve as a basis for planning and decision-making for a wide range of solid wastes. This plan sets out a long-range vision for solid waste management that includes shifting from a *throwaway society* towards a system that reduces the generation and toxicity of trash and treats wastes as valuable raw materials and energy resources, rather than useless garbage or trash. “We all share responsibility for the trash we make...so we all need to be part of the solution”, says DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy. “The plan calls for dramatically expanding recycling and composting programs in the state, but it also includes working with product manufacturers to design products that are reusable, recyclable or compostable and encouraging individuals and organizations to make wise purchasing decisions.”



Changing the Balance -
CT’s Solid Waste Management Plan

To read more about the strategies or for more information about the State Solid Waste Management Plan — see www.ct.gov/dep or contact Tess Gutowski at (860) 424-3096.

Deliberate obsolescence in all its forms — technological, psychological, or planned – is uniquely an American invention. Not only did we invent disposable products, ranging from diapers to cameras to contact lenses, but we invented the very concept of disposability itself.” *Excerpt from Giles Slade’s book, Made to Break*

What’s Inside . . .

• 7 For 07	2
• Connecticut Company “Insures” The Environment	3
• Recycling Roundup	5
• Finding A Cure For Hospital Waste	5
• What’s New In P2? — from the Connecticut DEP	6
• Connecticut To Encourage Responsible Growth	6
• Organic Land Care Project	6
• Ask Eartha	7
• P2 Calendar	8

7 For 07 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Even if your diet or exercise plans have already “hit the skids”, here are 7 resolutions for 2007 that are easy to keep and will really make a difference—for you and the environment.

Get Some Fresh Air. Use houseplants to improve the air quality in your home. A NASA study showed that plants such as the green spider plant, bamboo palm and golden pothos were effective at filtering formaldehyde, a chemical which is outgassed from pressed wood furniture, carpeting and many other items found in the home. One plant for each 10 square yards of floor space is enough. For more information, see *Your Naturally Healthy Home*, by Alan Berman or go to <http://cleanairgardening.com/houseplants.html>.



Just Say No... to junk mail and catalogues. Can you part with some of those catalogues? Check with other family members then start dialing or e-mailing the company to get taken off their list. Check with your town to see if you can put junk mail and catalogues in your recycling bin. On-line resources to reduce unwanted advertising or “junk” mail include: https://www.directmail.com/directory/mail_preference/, <https://www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailing>, www.obviously.com/junkmail/ or www.greendimes.com.

Lighten Up. If every American home replaced just one incandescent light bulb with a compact fluorescent light bulb, we would save enough energy to light more than 2.5 million homes for a year and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of nearly 800,000 cars. (Source: <http://www.energystar.gov>)

Chill Out. Spend a night at home with friends and family learning about climate change by watching the movie *An Inconvenient Truth* or *The Great Warming*. Then, go to www.climatecrisis.com or www.CTClimateChange.com/WhatCanIDo.html to see what simple steps you can take at home to reduce your “carbon footprint” (like turning down the thermostat, replacing furnace filters, etc.).

Free Yourself... of unused, unloved, and unwanted household items. Instead of throwing “it” out, give it away by listing it on <http://www.freecycle.org>, or <http://www.throwplace.com/> or by donating it to a thrift shop like Goodwill or the Salvation Army. The non-profit ReCONNstruction Center accepts and sells usable building materials such as plumbing and lighting fixtures, cabinets, lumber, etc. For more information - <http://reconnstructioncenter.org> or call them at (860) 597-3390.

Think Spring. Your garden will thrive with your own “home-grown” compost and your lawn will be better off if you “grasscycle” (leave grass clippings on the lawn).



For how-to's, go to <http://www.ct.gov/dep>, or get the videos *Home Composting - Turning Your Spoils To Soil* and *Don't Trash Grass* from your local library or the DEP store by calling (860) 424-3555 or (860) 424-3692. For composting bins, visit your local garden center or an on-line retailer such as http://www.composters.com/main_comp.html

Don't Drive Yourself Crazy. Relax and take the bus or carpool to work one day a week (find a carpool on www.Nuride.com, or bus and train info at <http://www.ctrides.com>).



By biking to work once a week or even once a month (<http://www.wecyclelect.org/btw.htm>), you can help the environment and be on

track with your '07 resolution to exercise more.

Connecticut Company Working To “Insure” A Better Environment

St. Paul Travelers, 85th of the Fortune 500 and one of the nation's major insurance companies, is also one of Hartford's rising stars, an ENERGY STAR that is! But, St. Paul Travelers doesn't stop there.

The company is committed to improving the environment of the communities in which it does business, and has voluntarily taken steps to make changes within the company and with its customers, like providing incentives to use mass transit and buy hybrid cars, recycling, cutting fossil fuel use and conserving energy.

In these days of rising energy costs, businesses cannot overlook opportunities to cut energy use and save money. St. Paul Travelers found that energy efficiency could have a big impact on their bottom line, as well as benefit the state's environment. The company utilized the U.S. EPA's energy benchmarking tools to evaluate the energy performance of their Hartford, Connecticut and Saint Paul, Minnesota campuses. The company invested in energy upgrades, including night setback controls to reduce building temperatures, variable frequency drives on motors, and sensors and controls to regulate ventilation and airflow. These improvements paid off in more ways than one. Not only does the Hartford facility now use almost one-third less energy compared with similar buildings, but St. Paul Travelers also saves \$3 million dollars each year. It is estimated that the Hartford building avoided more than 20 million pounds of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions annually – the equivalent of taking more than 2,100 cars off the road for one year. The company has earned ENERGY STAR recognition and a plaque for their Hartford campus and corporate headquarters in Saint Paul.



Since protecting the environment and conserving natural resources are important principles at St. Paul Travelers, they have also become one of the first insurance companies to join the Climate Leaders program. This voluntary program run by the federal EPA asks participants to set goals and strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. The company is in the process of determining a reduction goal and actions that will be taken to achieve the goal. While this is a considerable undertaking, St. Paul Travelers is not a newcomer to taking steps to reduce its environmental “footprint”. Some of the sustainable business practices that are already in place in Hartford, along with energy conservation and efficiency, include reducing solid waste through an active recycling program, reducing air emissions through a shared heating and cooling systems, and reducing gasoline use by incorporating hybrid vehicles in their business fleet. They are developing new initiatives as well, that will include environmental criteria for their corporate vendors.

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Connecticut Company Working To “Insure” A Better Environment (continued from page 3 . . .)

Over 6,000 employees work at the Hartford office, and the company realizes commuting to work adds to traffic congestion, which in turn, contributes to air pollution. Alternatives to driving alone, including using mass transit and bicycling, are actively supported. Bus passes, which are sold onsite, are subsidized and payroll deducted on a pre-tax basis. This incentive is very successful, with more than 1,500 bus passes sold each month. Biking is also promoted in a number of ways, including the availability of bike racks and showers, and sponsoring monthly Bike-to-Work breakfast events. Here too, St. Paul Travelers has met with success, as consistently having the highest number of corporate cyclists participating at the downtown Hartford breakfast events. For vanpools, the company provides free garage parking.

St. Paul Travelers also promotes environmental awareness and provides incentives to their customers in unique ways. To encourage drivers to choose hybrid vehicles, the company began offering a 10% discount on their auto insurance to hybrid car owners in Connecticut and several other states. Hybrid cars burn less gasoline per mile, so they release less pollution and fewer greenhouse gases. Hybridtravelers.com, a web site especially for hybrid drivers, was created.

The company also participated in EPA's *Change A Light, Change the World* campaign, which encourages citizens to replace a conventional light bulb or fixture in their home with a compact fluorescent bulb. Compared with incandescent bulbs, compact fluorescents last 10 times longer, use one-third less energy, and save money - more than \$30 in utility costs -

over the lifetime of one bulb. St. Paul Travelers set a goal to have 1,000 of their employees pledging to replace at least one light at home or work.

The company continues to look for additional opportunities that benefit the environment. Through their commitment and innovative actions, St. Paul Travelers is ensuring their place as an environmental leader in the Hartford community, and is playing an active role in addressing Connecticut's clean air and climate change issues.



Recycling Roundup

Finding A Cure For Hospital Waste

Hospitals create a lot of waste in helping us get and stay well. From managing the day to day operations of the facility and patient care, hospitals create enormous amounts of trash and sometimes surplus large quantities of furniture and equipment. Trash disposal is expensive and damaging to the environment, but sometimes it's just plain wasteful. Quality materials and unused surgical supplies destined for the dumpster are desperately needed in the US and around the world. So how can a hospital save money, protect the environment *and* benefit others? Here are two organizations that can help.

When Connecticut Children's Medical Center (CCMC) in Hartford had a mix of materials from furniture to toys that needed a home, they turned to the Institution Recycling Network (IRN) for help. The IRN is a New Hampshire-based cooperative of over 125 private schools, colleges and hospitals located throughout New England. Each institution pays a membership fee, plus a small commission on each transaction. IRN provides a single point of contact for managing all the logistics of recycling or reuse of more than 75 types of recyclable materials - from construction and demolition debris to surplus furniture - saving those institutions time and money.

CCMC first learned of IRN at a Connecticut Hospital Environmental Roundtable (CHER) workshop on *Recycling Construction and Demolition Waste* in March 2006. Directly after the meeting, IRN's Stacey Clark went to an off-site location in Hartford where the materials were being stored and the process began. Less than two months later, IRN arranged for almost 20 tons of furniture and equipment to be

shipped to Haiti for distribution by *Food For The Poor*, (a non-profit interdenominational Christian relief organization) to a local clinic. CCMC saved about 30% by recycling the materials through IRN over what it would have cost the hospital to dispose them and they have the satisfaction of knowing that they are being put to good use. More recently, IRN worked with CCMC again to remove high-end x-ray equipment; the equipment was then donated to Universal Heart Hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana. (Note: Not all of the materials IRN handles go to non-profits; see their website for more details.)

Operating rooms discard tons of unused surgical supplies because if they were prepared for a patient, but not used during the procedure, they cannot be used on another patient, even if the items are decontaminated. What a waste! But there's a "remedy". REMEDY is a national organization that helps hospitals recover open, but unused surgical supplies, such as gloves, sutures, gauze and catheters for donation to international medical facilities where the need is great. Dr. William Rosenblatt of Yale University School of Medicine founded REMEDY after working in clinics in Peru and seeing first-hand the lack of basic medical supplies and the constant reuse of things like surgical gloves in the operating room. The program at Yale-New Haven Hospital alone has donated on average over 2.5 ton of supplies per year since 1991. REMEDY now has over 500 participating medical facilities, 9 of which are in CT. Although REMEDY does not distribute the supplies, they maintain a database of almost 1000 non-profit organizations that do. They have also developed

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Unloading donated furniture in Nicaragua

WHAT'S NEW IN P2?

from the Connecticut DEP

Finding A Cure For Hospital Waste

(continued from page 5 . . .)

education for hospital staff and a protocol for preparing the shipment.

Since some hospitals already send out other types of surgical supplies for reprocessing, the collection for REMEDY can be integrated into the operating room workflow.

There are many ways other hospitals can cut waste and reduce their impact on the environment. But what could be more gratifying than to put quality materials and health-saving supplies that would have been trash into the hands of people who need them the most?

Further Resources:

- IRN, <http://www.ir-network.com/>, Mark Lennon, (603) 229-1962
- REMEDY, <http://www.remedyinc.org>, Dr. William Rosenblatt, (203) 785-2802 or Sylvia Botero, Executive Director, (813) 935-8757
- MED-EQ, <http://www.med-eq.org> is an on-line organization created by REMEDY that connects donors of medical equipment with registered non-profit recipients. After donors and recipients register to use this web site, they can post and request items.
- If a medical facility is donating or disposing of x-ray emitting equipment, it must submit a notification form to the CT DEP Radiation Division, (860) 424-3029.
- For more information on how hospitals can reduce waste, go to Hospitals For a Healthy Environment (H2E), <http://www.h2e-online.org/>
- CT Hospital Environmental Roundtable, contact Nan Peckham at (860) 424-3357 or nan.peckham@po.state.ct.us

Connecticut To Encourage Responsible Growth

In October of 2006 Governor Rell issued Executive Order 15, aimed at halting sprawl in Connecticut as well as cutting energy waste and greenhouse gas emissions. Under the Order, an Office of Responsible Growth will be created as well as an inter-agency Steering Council. Regional roundtables will provide a mechanism for on-going municipal input. The Council will look at land use, housing and transportation policies and projects with the goal of promoting transit-oriented development that provides commuters with bus or rail alternatives and encourages walkability of Connecticut's communities. Criteria will be established so that state funds are targeted for uses that are consistent with responsible growth; economic incentives will also be targeted to support development in designated Responsible Growth areas. A new webpage, "*Green and Growing*" will be created to highlight best practices and develop a virtual toolbox to promote responsible development community by community.

Organic Land Care Project



The Organic Land Care DVD produced by DEP is a hit! Representatives from 70 towns and cities throughout the state attended showings of the DVD or requested a copy. As a follow-up, DEP will be working with a municipality on a pilot project in 2007 to compare using organic land care practices with conventional fertilizers and pesticides on a municipal recreation field. For more information, contact Judy Prill, DEP Office of Pollution Prevention at (860) 424-3694 or judith.prill@po.state.ct.us.



Note: This feature offers answers to select environmental questions. Send your question to the editor's address -- judith.prill@po.state.ct.us and watch future issues for an answer.

Dear Readers:

I recently received this letter and I wanted to share it with you. This P2 View reader explains why he calls the Prius his "free" car!

- Eartha

Dear Eartha:

I have thoroughly enjoyed your articles in the past. People who think like you do, that is people who care deeply about the environment, helped me decide to buy a Prius. I love the fuel efficiency, the electric motor, and the cutting edge technology of this first of its kind model car. Though it has not much more than a 10-gallon tank, it is the rare week indeed that I visit the gas pump more than once even with my substantial weekly commute.

I loved the idea of the car, but how could I persuade my wife that the purchase would be a wise one? It actually did not take me too long to hit upon a scheme. All I had to do was convince her that the Prius was actually FREE. This is how I managed it.

Since the Prius retains its value, the used one I bought in 2002 still came with a \$21,000.00 price tag. (Warning—at that price only the first one is free.) The key to my argument, though, was the Dodge Ram van that the Prius was destined to replace. The Dodge used gas like there was no tomorrow, which was

becoming a real drain as the price of gasoline rose.

Given my necessary commute (26 miles each way on weekdays) and whatever driving around town I was doing, my van would typically require me to purchase about thirty gallons a week. By contrast, the Prius uses only about 8 gallons a week to do the same job. At the time of my purchase the price of gas was still on the correct side of two dollars a gallon, but rising fast, so I postulated that, over the next 10-year period (about the lifespan of a car at my house) the average price of gas would be \$2.00 a gallon. If this guess turned out to be correct, I would save about \$44.00 a week compared to what it cost me to run the van, or in other terms, \$2,228 dollars per year.

The sticker price for my Prius, remember, was \$21,000.00; so dividing this by the amount I save each year on gasoline ($\$21,000.00 / \$2,228 = 9.43$ years) shows me that it will take nine and a half years for the Prius to pay for itself in gas savings alone.

This is why I was getting perversely excited during that period six months ago when the price of gasoline climbed over \$3.00 per gallon. Boy! Recalculating at \$3.00 per gallon showed me that my car would pay for itself in just over SIX years. The higher the price of a gallon of gas, the faster the



Prius pays for itself. (If gas hits five dollars a gallon, I might have to pick up a second Prius.)

Obviously, my reasoning is not unique to the Prius. There are other cars with very decent gas mileage that are priced competitively and could replace your gas-guzzler nearly as well, but I liked the fact that the Prius was so revolutionary. The electric motor of the Prius is the primary power source, but is so well designed that it does not require the owner to go through any special maintenance routines. Using one-third the gas not only gets me a free car, but it helps the environment. If every driver in America cut his/her gas consumption similarly, we would certainly reduce our dependence on foreign oil while driving around for the next ten years in a fleet of free cars.

— Stephen M.,
Storrs, CT

Editor's Note: Interested in buying a hybrid car? Visit the Department of Energy's website for their Hybrid Vehicle Cost Calculator. You can compare lifetime costs and air emissions of hybrid models to those of conventional vehicles.
www.eere.energy.gov/cleancities/hev/calculator



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P 2 C A L E N D A R

A S E L E C T I O N O F E N V I R O N M E N T A L E V E N T S

January 31, February 1, 2, 5, 6, 2007

Organic Land Care Course
New Haven

An intensive five-day course based on the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) Standards leading to an accreditation as an Organic Land Care Professional. Contact CT NOFA for more information at (203) 888-5146 or <http://www.organiclandcare.net/events/6thannual5day.php>

March 13 - 15, 2007

BuildingEnergy07
Boston, MA

Annual conference and trade show for renewable energy and green building, sponsored by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association. For more information, visit <http://www.buildingenergy.nesea.org/>

February and March 2007

Green Building Events
Various locations in CT

Events sponsored by the CT Green Building Council such as LEED training, Annual Design and Construction Industry Joint Dinner and tours of new green buildings within the state. For more information, visit www.ctgbc.org or call Kim Trella at (860) 424-3234.

February and March 2007

DEP Workshops and Events
Various locations in CT

Build your own bluebird nest box, learn about wildlife tracks, participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count, find out about how to make maple syrup, and meet a Bald Eagle and 3 native hawks. Visit DEP's Calendar of Events for more details at www.ct.gov/dep.

Plan an Earth Day Event for April - www.earthday.net