

PWGC Spring Newsletter



*Helping You Make Your Hospital
the Best for the Community and
the Environment!*

EPA Continues Efforts to Cease the Practice of Pharmaceuticals Being Poured Down the Drain!

The EPA has continued to study the issue of how health care facilities are managing and disposing of unused pharmaceuticals and POTW treatment effectiveness in an effort to identify the root cause and potential solutions to address the issue of pharmaceuticals in our waterways. Since 2008, the EPA conducted site visits to 3 additional hospitals in 3 states, four LTCFs in three states, a veterinary hospital, a long-term care pharmacy, a hospice, an oncology clinic, and a waste management vendor facility to obtain more detailed information on how pharmaceuticals are managed, tracked, and disposed. During each site visit, EPA collected general site information and specific unused pharmaceutical management and disposal information. The objectives of these site visits included:

- Collect information on the amount of unused pharmaceuticals disposed when available;
- Observe pharmaceutical waste management practices;
- Identify common industry disposal practices, guidance, and regulatory requirements;
- Identify challenges with the generation and disposal of unused, unwanted, and expired pharmaceuticals;
- Identify BMPs and their costs; and
- Gather information about how hospitals, LTCFs, or other facilities operate. Additionally, EPA contacted other types of health care facilities (e.g., medical and dental offices, university and prison health clinics, and veterinary clinics) to learn about their unused pharmaceutical disposal practices. EPA also reviewed studies on POTW pharmaceutical treatment effectiveness and the potential pathways for unused pharmaceuticals to be released into the environment.

These site visits will assist the EPA with releasing a set of best practices for managing excess, expired, and unwanted pharmaceuticals which is anticipated to be published in the fall of 2010. Additionally, the EPA is still pending inclusion of pharmaceutical waste with the universal waste rule (UWR).

The state of New York has taken action as the NY Office of the Attorney General has begun investigating pharmaceutical and other waste management and disposal practices of hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities. Some inspections were conducted in 2009 and two critical access hospitals in New York are now permanently forbidden from "dumping, discharging, disposing, spilling or placing any pharmaceutical wastes" down toilets, sinks, or drains. Allegations of violations of state and federal laws and regulations at the hospitals fell into three categories: generation of hazardous wastes, storage of hazardous wastes, and illegal discharge of ignitable hazardous wastes to a publicly owned water-treatment facility.

New York was granted by the EPA approval to administer their own pollutant-discharge elimination systems rather than the national system authorized by the federal Clean Water Act. EPA and the state of New York are trying to eliminate the practice of disposing of unused pharmaceuticals entering our waterways.

PWGC will continue to stay informed of ongoing news concerning pharmaceutical management and disposal.

*"P.W. Grosser Consulting
serves our clients, our
neighborhoods and our
society!"*



**STRATEGIC
ENVIRONMENTAL
SOLUTIONS**

*Happy Spring! PWGC's
hospital newsletters are
designed to assist
Facilities Engineering and
other departments within
the hospitals to stay
updated on ever
changing environmental
rules, regulations, and
other pertinent issues
related to
the healthcare industry.*

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Carbon Crazy or Carbon Smart??

The debate on whether carbon footprint is just a buzzword or not seems to have dissipated. Not only have regulations been promulgated mandating certain facilities to report greenhouse gas emissions, but more so, there is a high demand by consumers for transparency in environmental impact. As stated in previous newsletters, a carbon footprint analysis is a means to benchmark for potential future reduction. As some have referred to going on a carbon diet, one needs to first step on the scale to know the starting number.

Additionally, although many facilities have conducted a carbon footprint there should be follow up especially if actions have been taken to reduce emissions. Annual analysis will assist with ideas and innovation of how to continually improve emissions. Some facilities have set internal goals to reduce emissions by 30% by 2020 and some have challenged themselves to become carbon neutral. These reductions have also shown small to significant cost savings.

Contact PWGC for further information on carbon footprint.



CALL TO RECYCLE!

Have you heard about call to recycle, www.call2recycle.org? This organization is the only free rechargeable battery and cell phone collection program in North America. Since 1994, Call2Recycle has diverted 50 million pounds of rechargeable batteries from the solid waste stream and established a network of 30,000 recycling drop-off points. This organization's goal is to advance green business practices and environmental sustainability. Call2Recycle is operated by the non-profit Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC).

Over the past year the RBRC has worked to enlist healthcare facilities in this program. They worked with Healthcare Corporate of America (HCA) and currently over 260 HCA facilities are enrolled and expected to generate thousands of recyclable rechargeable batteries. A benefit to this program is that it provides real measurable data so that a reliable record may be maintained on the amount of rechargeable batteries your facility recycles.

Learn more about recycle programs today! Contact PWGC.

Hospital Water Bottle Ban??



St. Vincent's Medical Center, a 397-bed hospital in Bridgeport, CT, recently banned the sale of bottled water in the building and will no longer distribute bottles to their patients. This ban was imposed to reduce the hospital's impact on the environment. The hospital began selling water bottles in the 1980's and has escalated to selling approximately 350,000 bottles a year, generating a lot of plastic! Despite recycling efforts, the hospital continued to see the plastics bottles enter the trash and evaluated that only 1 in 5 bottles were being recycled. The hospital developed an educational program to inform the hospital employees and visitors that the municipal water is very good and goes through rigorous testing and is best of all free. It is a cultural change to switch back to not purchasing water bottles and will have a positive environmental impact!

More Water Bottle News- 5 Cent Tax on Bottled Water & Why it Pays to Recycle

Reduce, reuse, recycle... we've all heard it... and try to abide by it the best way we can. The order of importance is listed above in sequential order; however, recycling is probably the easiest for us to accomplish. According to the Clean Air Council, Americans threw away an estimated 2.5 million bottles an hour last year. To promote reducing consumption and recycling of bottled water, NY along with 10 other states have implemented a water bottle tax. In New York, as of November 1, 2009 there is a 5 cent tax per bottle. Glass, plastics, aluminum, etc. are commodities and if such recyclable materials end up in landfills they do not add value to our economy. According to the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), about 80% of deposit bottles are recycled, versus less than 20% of non-deposit bottles. Data also suggests a person who drinks two liters of tap water a day will spend just 50 cents a year and people who drink two liters of bottled water a day will spend \$1,460!