

Dallas First Major City to Make EPA's Performance Track

DALLAS, Texas, September 22, 2008 (ENS) - With a population of over 1.2 million people, Dallas is the ninth largest U.S. city by population and the 19th largest by area. Now, Dallas has become the first large American city to set goals that go above and beyond environmental requirements as part of the U.S. EPA's National Environmental Performance Track.

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"Performance Track members are raising the bar when it comes to environmental stewardship," said EPA Regional Administrator Richard Greene. "By setting high goals that go beyond compliance with regulations, members are delivering real results that will preserve and protect our natural resources."

To earn membership, applicants must demonstrate and commit to maintaining a strong record of environmental compliance, set three-year goals for continuous improvements in environmental performance beyond their legal requirements, have internal systems in place to manage environmental impacts, engage in community outreach and consistently report results.

In Dallas, residents have fun with environmental protection. On Saturday, the Dallas City Hall Plaza was filled with booths and table displays from dozens of conservation groups and green businesses to mark National Pollution Prevention Week.

People tried out hybrid cars, enjoyed free food, learned about renewable energy, eco-friendly gardening and programs for kids.

They celebrated with Keep Dallas Beautiful, which won the 2008 Governor's Community Achievement Award and an accompanying \$265,000 grant to use in its landscaping program along state rights-of-way.



Green Dallas booth at the city's Earth Day 2008 festival in April.

(Photo courtesy City of Dallas)

Dallas City Manager Mary Suhm says the city is moving ahead with its energy savings and pollution reduction plans.

"To help reduce pollution from energy production, the mayor and the City Council support our commitment to purchasing 40 percent of the energy the city uses in 2008 to come from renewable sources such as wind and solar energies," she says.

"We are also already committed to reducing energy consumption by five percent each year at our city facilities in order to further reduce our footprint," says Suhm.

"In order to limit our vehicle exhaust emissions, a major component of the air quality issues in our region, the city has replaced 41 percent of its non-emergency vehicle fleet with alternative fuel or hybrid vehicles," she said.

Over the next three years, Dallas intends to reduce water use at all city sites by five percent - a reduction of 49 million gallons of water

used.

The city's Environmental Management System covers over 450 facilities including treatment and delivery of drinking water, the treatment of wastewater, and garbage collection.

Suhm says that the Environmental Management System improves the city's bottom line and helps shrink its environmental impact.

"Better yet," she said, "our demand on the planet's precious resources is minimized and the future we leave our children is one of hope with an inherited environmental consciousness of which we can all be proud. In short, Dallas gets green."

Other new Performance Track members recognized from Texas include Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene; Goss International Americas Inc. in Fort Worth, Rio Grande Village Store & RV Park in Big Bend National Park; Rough Canyon Marina, LLC in Del Rio; and Southfork Ranch in Parker.

EPA Performance Track members get more than just a pat on the back - they are trusted to comply with environmental laws and are what the EPA calls "low priority for routine federal inspection."

This policy was created in consultation with the EPA's enforcement office and is viewed by the federal agency as a rational way to use inspection resources more effectively. It does not mean that members are not inspected by the EPA or state environmental agencies.

The intent of the policy is to shift some resources from Performance Track members who have strong compliance records, use environmental management systems, and commit to public performance goals to other facilities that may pose a higher environmental risk.

Since the launch of the program in 2000, Performance Track members have set more than 4,000 goals to benefit the environment.

As a result, they have reported greenhouse gas reductions of 310,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, reductions in nitrogen oxides of 13,000 tons, and reductions of hazardous waste of 52,000 tons.

Recently, Dallas won international certification for its environmental efforts, Upon completion of an audit, in June Dallas became the first major U.S. city to receive an ISO 14001 certification for environmental auditing, environmental performance evaluation, environmental labeling, and life-cycle assessment from the International Organization for Standardization, located in Geneva, Switzerland.

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