

EPA's WasteWise Program.

Reducing Waste Nationally, One City at a Time

The three cornerstones of WasteWise—waste prevention, recycling, and buying recycled products—are among the most effective ways to slash the greenhouse gases from MSW.

By Greg Czarnecki

One does not live in Clifton, NJ, for long without learning about waste reduction. Residents are given free reusable mugs to cut down on disposable cups. City employees regularly procure recycled office paper. "Smart Shopping Tours" teach students about environmental purchasing. And more than 250 local businesses have been recognized with environmental certificates for taking waste reduction measures. It's no wonder that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection declared Clifton's recycling program the best in the state.

What started as a small program using only local—and some state—resources in the early 1990s evolved into a comprehensive, nationally recognized waste reduction program within a decade. In 1999, the United States Environmental Protection Agency named Clifton one of 18 model communities because of its successful recycling and source reduction activities. One of the keys to Clifton's growth and success is EPA's WasteWise Program.

WasteWise is EPA's free, voluntary partnership program founded in 1994 to help businesses and organizations reduce the amount of solid waste they generate. In 1997, WasteWise saw huge potential for the program to assist government and municipal workers in their jobs as solid waste managers, and it diversified its membership to include state, local, tribal, and federal government partners. Currently nearly 1,200 organizations throughout the country, including more than 160 state and local governments, demonstrate their commitment to waste reduction through their partnerships with WasteWise. Another 125 organizations, including more than 25 state and local governments, currently serve as endorsers—committing to actively promote WasteWise to other organizations.

WasteWise encourages participants to develop programs that best suit their needs and focus on reducing waste within individual organizations—including state and local government offices and departments. Government participants vary from cities and

local agencies to larger counties and state agencies. They include the City of Clifton, the Los Angeles (CA) Department of Water and Power, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Washoe County (NV) Government, King County (WA) Department of Natural Resources, and Kitsap County, WA.

Clifton, NJ: A Closer Look

Clifton's mission to educate all members of the community—from its elementary school students to its business leaders—about the importance of waste reduction and recycling hasn't changed much over the years, although its waste reduction and recycling program has. Alfred DuBois, municipal recycling coordinator for the City of Clifton, says Clifton's program "started out staying very local, then worked with the state for several years. We eventually found that we needed something on a national level, and WasteWise fit the bill."

Clifton, a city of approximately 78,000 people, joined the program in 1997 and became an active partner immediately, working one-on-one with its WasteWise representative to meet and exceed its goals. DuBois states that WasteWise was exactly what the city was looking for—a national program with the ability and resources to provide the technical assistance the city needed. "We just needed more help with our program and activities than the state was able to provide. WasteWise has been a tremendous resource for us," he remarks.

With the help of WasteWise, Clifton's program continued to grow and gained recognition on both state and national levels for its impressive services. "Our recycling collection system is designed to preserve resources because we do not commingle," maintains DuBois. "We recognize that for a recycling program to be successful, there has to be a market for those materials." The city places a lot of emphasis on

its "Smart Shopping Tours" that teach students and residents the importance of purchasing items with a greater chance of being recycled and items that conserve resources in the first place. As part of its Waste-

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