



## SPOTLIGHT ON... OREGON DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

### AT A GLANCE

**Oregon Department of Energy**  
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[www.oregon.gov/energy](http://www.oregon.gov/energy)

#### THEIR GOALS AND MISSION

The Oregon Department of Energy reduces the long-term costs of energy for Oregonians and protects Oregon's environment by saving energy, developing clean energy resources and cleaning up nuclear waste

#### HOW THEY GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

##### Reduce:

A photovoltaic array offsets some of their energy use while a sophisticated HVAC system lowers overall demand. Careful monitoring of building occupancy prevents avoids heating or cooling an empty building.

##### Reuse:

Surplus office and desk supplies are restocked in the supply closet for later use. Reusable dishware, cups, and cutlery in the lunchroom replace disposables.

##### Recycle:

An extensive recycling program captures many of the harder items to recycle like plastic bags, printer cartridges, CDs, video cassettes, and Styrofoam. Food waste and coffee grounds are collected for composting.

##### Enthusiasm:

Both staff and management express an open willingness to do everything they can to conserve resources and promote sustainable initiatives.



**It is no surprise that the employees at the Oregon Department of Energy focus on sustainability inside their own building. After all, these same employees are charged with a mission to “reduce the long-term costs of energy for Oregonians” and their efforts are part of the state government’s sustainability effort.**

The 100 employees who work for the energy department have a mindset about energy use and treading lightly on the earth. It is seen in their recycling and reuse efforts, waste reduction, water conservation, educational efforts and, of course, how they save energy.

In 2008, the Oregon Department of Energy became the first state agency to receive EarthWISE certification. The energy department’s ambitious attitude spurred change in other agencies—now 21 Oregon Department of Administrative Services buildings and the Oregon Lottery also have EarthWISE certification.

In addition to the standard recyclables, ODOE collects and recycles compact fluorescent light bulbs, batteries, plastic bags, CDs, video cassettes, plastic lids, paperboard, magazines, printer cartridges, glass, metal and Styrofoam.

Energy employees also are well-versed in the reuse of materials. Unused, surplus materials from their desks are restocked in the supply closet; a “free stuff” table allows staff to put note cards, magazines or gift bags they bring from home for other employees to take; and paper only used on one-side is made into quarter-sheet

notepads for employees to take phone messages.

“We haven’t had to order hanging file folders in ages,” said Lou Bettencourt, the building services coordinator for the energy department.

Energy employees also have taken steps to reduce their waste generation. In the lunchroom, ceramic plates and reusable mugs, glasses and silverware replace disposables. Coffee grounds and food waste is collected in compost containers.

“Our garbage bin is rarely full because of our composting efforts,” Bettencourt said.



Lou Bettencourt is the building services coordinator for the Oregon Department of Energy.

To conserve water, energy staff uses low-flow toilets and shower heads, aerators on the faucets in the restrooms and lunchroom and an Energy Star-rated dishwasher that is only run when full. To further protect water resources, energy employees took time to mark all of the storm drains on the block around the agency building so that people know these drains lead to streams and not to dump anything in them.

But where the Oregon Department of Energy excels is in the energy conservation realm. Despite leasing a building constructed decades ago as a grocery store, energy employees have found ingenious ways to reduce their carbon footprint.

A solar photovoltaic array is displayed at the front of the building and helps offset some of the building’s electrical use. Bettencourt controls a sophisticated heating, ventilation and air conditioning system that likely saves thousands of dollars a year. The eight rooftop heaters turn off at 5 p.m. every day and the baseboard heaters only run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Bettencourt can control the system from home so that unscheduled days off—snow

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The pink cruiser bicycle, named Margaret, is available for ODOE employees to use.



The "free stuff" table encourages reuse by allowing employees to bring items from home that they no longer need and offer it to others who will use it.



The Oregon Department of Energy installed solar panels to showcase the technology and offset its energy bills.

days, for example—don't mean the heat is left on in an empty building. And, of course, holidays and furloughs are scheduled into the program.

The lighting in the building is controlled by motion sensors and in the 9,000-square-foot main building, only 14 fluorescent lights are kept on at any given time.

Reducing the carbon footprint also relates to commuting to work. Energy employees are encouraged to carpool, bus, bike or walk to work. Carpoolers pay a lower monthly fee for parking at the office and bike commuters have access to a locked room for bike storage. The energy agency's fleet includes two standard hybrids, one plug-in hybrid, one all-wheel drive vehicle and a cruiser bicycle.

The Oregon Department of Energy continues to look for new ways to reduce energy use, conserve water or otherwise preserve precious resources. Its sustainability team meets monthly, orients new staff about sustainability efforts, and hosts a lunchbox series, which features presentations on sustainability-related topics.

"Through the Sustainability Committee, volunteers and management we have a consistent message that we care about conservation and sustainability," Bettencourt said. "Agency-wide, there is an expectation that we are doing everything we can, and if not, why not. It isn't just whether it is saving money or time, it is a genuine concern for our impact on the earth and a genuine concern that we are doing what we can."

### EarthWISE Certification

In 2008, the Oregon Department of Energy was the first state agency to become EarthWISE certified. They received a Mid-Willamette Valley Green Award for Sustainable Organization of the Year in 2010.



### WANT TO DO THIS AT YOUR BUSINESS?

Marion County's EarthWISE program can help. Visit [mcEarthwise.net](http://mcEarthwise.net), call 503.365.3188 or email [Earthwise@co.marion.or.us](mailto:Earthwise@co.marion.or.us)