

Aj's Auto Repair Is A Leader In The World Of Green Auto Mechanic Shops.

By Beth Casper
Special to the Salem Business Journal

Not only does AJ's recycle and dispose of its waste responsibly and use the most energy efficient products, the shop pioneered a new way of turning waste into energy and invested in a time-saving, waste-reducing process for cleaning vehicle parts.

In fact, AJ's Auto Repair was one of the first businesses to be certified EarthWISE. EarthWISE is a Marion County free business assistance program. EarthWISE staff helps businesses recycle, save energy, reduce waste, and much more. To earn certification, a business meets criteria in six areas. AJ's Auto Repair is one of more than 150 EarthWISE businesses and organizations in Marion County.

AJ's also has been recognized by Oregon Business Magazine last year as one of the 100 best companies to work for in Oregon. The company was highlighted in part for its focus on the environment.

AJ's story starts more than four decades ago when Bob Anderson and Glen Jones began repairing cars in 1972 out of a one-car garage.

Today, AJ's Auto Repair can accommodate 24 cars at a time and has a staff of 18.

When they aren't working on cars, staff members are showing other mechanics their innovative techniques for saving money and the environment. They've had owners from auto shops as far away as the Midwest come and learn from the practices in Salem.

AJ's has four used-oil furnaces that burn old motor oil and other lubricants. The heat created is used to warm the shop, eliminat-

ing the need for any other source of heat.

AJ's burns about 5,000 gallons of motor oil and other used petroleum products a year.

"The furnace puts out fewer pollutants than an idling car and burns very cleanly," says owner Bob Anderson. "Why every auto shop doesn't burn used motor oil, I have no idea."

AJ's also installed four solvent-free, high-pressure hot water-based washers that clean parts in just minutes. Parts come out of the washer hot enough to air dry quickly, ready to be painted or rebuilt.

The washers save each of nine repair technicians about an hour a day—instead of washing car parts by hand, they can work on repairing cars. The washers also use a benign substance—water—instead of the typical cleaners which contain dangerous volatile organic compounds.

The parts washers, as you might expect, use a lot of water. But not from the tap.

AJ's 2,000 square-foot roof is designed to capture 1,650 gallons of rain water. In addition to going to the parts washers, rain water is used to mop floors, flush toilets, automatically water the landscaping, and test vehicles for internal water leaks. Any leftover water from mopping goes back into the parts washers so no water goes down the drain.

AJ's also has been able to cut its disposal of antifreeze and Freon gas in half.

The antifreeze that comes out of automobiles gets filtered and cleaned, the freezing level and pH adjusted and then is pumped right back into the car. If it's too diluted, new antifreeze is added. AJ's does basically the same thing with Freon. If an air conditioner doesn't work, all the Freon is vacuumed out, cleaned and filtered. System leaks are re-

paired, if needed, and the Freon is pumped back in.

This technique has meant that AJ's has only needed to purchase about half as much new antifreeze as before. It also means that AJ's doesn't need to dedicate shop space to storing used antifreeze and Freon gas while waiting to dispose of it properly.

AJ's Auto Repair also was instrumental in reducing the amount of mercury in the environment. Over a four year period, AJ's piloted a program through the Oregon Environmental Council and the state of Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality that removed mercury light switches in cars, free of charge.

"The goal was to remove 10,000 switches in the state," Anderson says. "By the time we did that, many switch manufacturers quit using them. The program really prompted manufacturers to stop making the mercury switches. But we still change them if a car comes in with one."

AJ's most recent project is a massive energy efficiency upgrade.

By the end of October, the T12 fluorescent lights in the 14,000-square-foot shop space will be replaced with LEDs (light-emitting diodes), a super efficient light. LEDs cut elec-

tric consumption by about 50 percent, and the project is expected to save AJ's Auto Repair more than \$5,000 a year. AJ's expects to recoup its expenses after a little less than four years.

"For any environmental task to work in business it has to pay—we have to make a profit," Anderson says. "Whatever we invest in has to pay back in proportion to the investment. We've saved about \$100,000 over the years due to the environmental investments we've made. From a business and environmental stand point we believe this is the best approach."

There is another key to AJ's environmental success: employees' involvement in decisions. "We've been doing this since the 1990s, but it's the guys that come up with some of these ideas," Anderson says.

"They are the ones that will figure out what will work out on the shop floor and what won't. They come up with how to implement the programs. And they are invested in the outcome. It's a team effort."

For more information about the EarthWISE program, go to www.mcEarthWISE.net or call Alan Pennington at 503-365-3188. To learn more about AJ's Auto repair, visit: www.ajsautorepair.com.



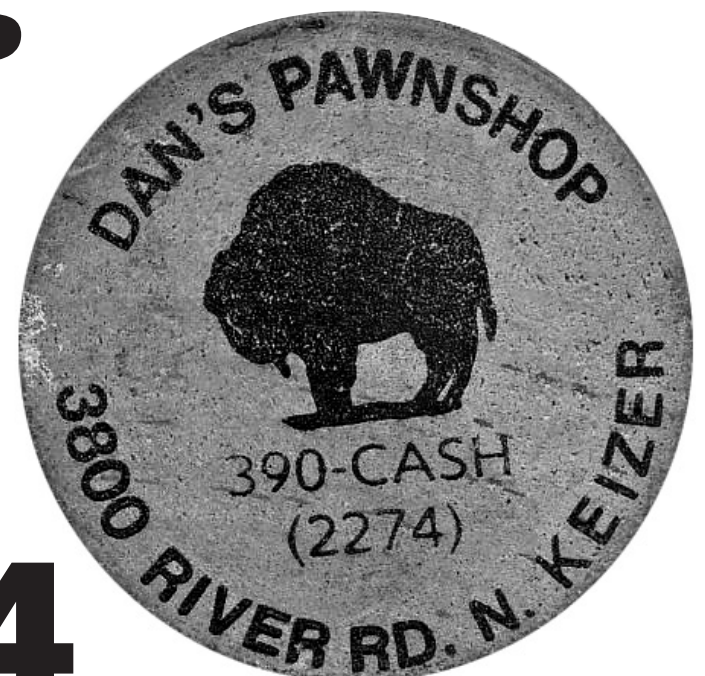
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Advantage Precast Takes Concrete Actions To Save Money And Environment

By Beth Casper
Special to the Salem Business Journal

Advantage Precast is not only a traditional concrete company producing manholes and catch basins for city streets. It is also one that designs and pours wine cellars, pollution control structures, bridges, retaining walls, planters, tables and benches.

The Keizer-based company's expanded vision includes an area many companies don't consider at all—taking care of the environment.

Advantage Precast Inc. was the second company in Marion County to be certified EarthWISE. It was the first to receive its recertification.

Reusing and recycling is foremost in green practices for the concrete company.

Any extra concrete that collects on the molds or falls on the ground and concrete products that are damaged or returned are crushed and used again.

"We try and recapture any concrete that is overpoured and repour it into bunker blocks or our recycled products," said owner Rick Day.

Bunker blocks are used to house bark dust, gravel or build retaining walls. They are often seen on farms.

Concrete waste can be reused in products that don't need to conform to specific structural standards—items such as landscape blocks, bike racks or bumper curbs.

Advantage Precast also uses less concrete to begin with by reusing forms that create holes in concrete products. Other companies manufacture the concrete product and then cut out the needed holes. This creates extra

concrete waste.

The cost of the hole former is recouped after about 20-30 uses.

"I have hole formers that I've used thousands of times," Day said. "I have hundreds of hole formers and many have been in use for 10 or more years."

Between reclaiming concrete waste and not creating it in the first place (with the hole formers), Advantage Precast saves an estimated \$35,000 a year in hauling and waste costs.

He's taken colored glass—from recycled pop, beer and wine bottles—to make a beautiful product called terrazzo, which is a

His company's environmental ethic extends to the promotion of concrete in general.

mixture of concrete and glass pieces that can be used for kitchen countertops, firepits and furniture.

And Day is even experimenting with mixing hair from local beauty salons into concrete products—again with an eye toward keeping the waste product out of landfills.

"The concrete product isn't as high strength but it doesn't hurt anything," Day said. "So we have had a local salon bring that to us—maybe between 10 to 20 cubic feet a year."

The use of so many recycled materials gave Day another green idea: the creation of a green product line. Products with recycled concrete, steel and sand are given a special green Advantage Precast label. These concrete items—with more than 90 percent recycled materials—can be used by developers to meet LEED green building standards.

Day's most recent project for his company involves conserving water. Day built a reclaimed water tank to recycle storm drain water for washing the concrete slurry off forms, molds and trucks. The water recycling project could save Advantage Precast hundreds in water bills each year.

The company had put in place a new storm drain policy that helps it capture and hold not just the concrete waste water but also the general storm water. In addition, Day has added buffer zones around the water retaining areas to catch silt, and employees monitor silt levels on a regular basis.

In an ongoing project, Day is installing a waste bunker to store any of their waste and use it in future recycled products.

The company already made a move to reduce traffic, noise and diesel pollution from area roads by purchasing its own ready-mix concrete truck and a longer trailer to transport more concrete products during each trip.

In the past, ready-mix trucks traveled to Advantage Precast to fill up with concrete to create the concrete products. And when the city of Portland commissioned 25 13-foot-long planter boxes for Morrison Street, Day could deliver them on one truck instead of taking multiple trips.

"You start worrying about the water, the air and conserving resources," Day said. "Everybody needs to do their part to protect what is around us. We had the opportunity and we took it."

In addition to his concern about the environment, Day worries about his employees as well. He knows that products that are safe for the natural world are often better for people too.

The lubricant used to separate the dried



concrete from its metal form typically is diesel based. But Day chose one with a vegetable base even though it is three times more expensive.

"Now we don't have to worry about the environment. If we have a little spillage, it is not a problem," he said. "And my employees don't get it on their clothes and take it home. Even though it is more expensive, it is the right thing to do."

His company's environmental ethic extends to the promotion of concrete in general. Day encourages people to think about using concrete instead of traditional wood structures.

"Concrete has a 100-plus year life, whereas wood doesn't," he said. "We are doing livestock pens, bridge panels and baseball dug-outs. Concrete is good for 100-plus years, it's vandal proof and it keeps people cooler in the summer."

For more information about the EarthWISE program, go to www.mcEarthWISE.net or call Alan Pennington at 503-365-3188. To learn more about Advantage Precast, visit: www.advantageprecast.com.

Marijuana Issues Referred To November Ballot

By Commissioner Sam Brentano

Measure 91, Oregon's recreational marijuana initiative, was approved by Oregon voters in November 2014. A lot has happened since that time. The Oregon Legislature, Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) and other state agencies have been working through how this new program will be administered.



SAM BRENTANO

MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

While Measure 91 passed statewide, in Marion County the recreational marijuana initiative failed by 51.56 percent. State law allows the

county to put to a vote the future expansion of recreational marijuana businesses outside of city limits. My fellow commissioners and I recently referred three measures related to marijuana to the November ballot.

My goal is not to convince you to vote one way or another, rather to make sure county residents are informed about what they will see on the ballot. Although all voters in Marion County will have the opportunity to weigh in on this issue, the outcome will only affect the unincorporated areas of the county outside of city limits.

Voters will determine:

- Whether to allow the establishment of medical marijuana processing sites and dispensaries in unincorporated Marion County. This measure will not affect medical marijuana grow sites or existing permitted dis-

pensaries.

- Whether to allow the establishment of recreational marijuana businesses including retailers, producers, processors, or wholesalers in unincorporated Marion County.

- Whether to establish a three percent local tax if the voters allow recreational marijuana businesses.

None of these measures encroach on an individual's right to possess, grow or use marijuana under Measure 91. Again, these measures affect only the unincorporated areas of the county and do not affect the authority of incorporated cities to allow recreational marijuana businesses.

This vote provides the residents of Marion County the opportunity to either confirm their 2014 vote or change direction. As a county, we are exploring provisions for ei-

ther outcome.

New community newsletter

We recently launched a new community e-newsletter – Marion County TODAY. We're looking forward to this new opportunity to keep you up to date on what's happening in Marion County. You can expect to hear from us with news and announcements about our programs and services. We hope this publication will help improve community understanding about important issues affecting our residents.

To see our first issue or sign-up for our mailing list, visit us at <http://bit.ly/MCToday>.

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