

Environmental Stewardship

Human Health and the Environment
Washington D.C.

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Vision

Kaiser Permanente's Vision for Environmental Stewardship:

We aspire to provide health care services in a manner that protects and enhances the environment and the health of communities now and for future generations.

George Halvorson

"Our mission is and always has been to improve the health of the communities we serve, and that includes an emphasis on environmental stewardship. What's good for our environment is going to be good for our members, our staff, and the community as a whole."

Jay Crosson, MD

"As physicians, we think the Hippocratic Oath says it all: 'Above all, do no harm' - that credo applies to the environment as well as to our patients."



Environmental Stewardship History

- **Our core values flow from people and events that date back decades in the history of Kaiser Permanente.**
 - Last fall KP marked the 40th anniversary of environmentalist Rachel Carson's last public address. Carson, discussing her book "Silent Spring," delivered the keynote address to a KP symposium of 1,500 physicians, scientists, students and news media. It was a risk to sponsor the speech at the time, but today it is seen as the first step in decades of leadership.
- **Regional activities to promote recycling and community health initiatives related to pollution and waste began locally in the early 1980's.**
 - Green Teams, Community Grants and Earth Day Fairs.
- **National Resource Conservation program started in 1997.**
 - Program Office director named, Waste Minimization Starter Kit promulgated.
- **Environmental Stewardship Council formed in 2001.**



Environmental Stewardship Council

- **Formed in 2001 to guide and support activities**
- **Executive Sponsors**
 - VPs in Key Functional Areas
- **Charter**
 - To achieve the vision of Environmental Stewardship at KP
- **Roles: Identify opportunities for environmental stewardship at KP**
 - Champion environmental stewardship within KP, particularly to constituent groups.
 - Provide subject matter expertise.
 - Proactively communicate the goals, values, and achievements of KP's environmental stewardship efforts to stakeholders and key influencers.
 - Demonstrate through leadership and example, the processes encompassed in environmental stewardship.
 - Identify barriers to the success of the Council and present solutions



Environmental Stewardship Focus Areas

Focus Area

**Sustainable
Operations**

Reducing the environmental impact of KP operations.

Procurement

Incorporating environmental considerations into all national contracts and ultimately local/regional purchasing process.

**Green
Buildings**

Incorporating sustainable design and construction practices through environmentally sound facility templates used in all new construction and re-builds.

**Sustainable
Food**

Improve the health of our members, employees, our communities and the environment by increasing access to fresh, healthy food in and around KP facilities.

**Chemical
Policy**

Aspiring to create an environment for its workers, members and visitors that is free from the hazards posed by chemicals that are harmful to humans, animals and the environment.

Overall Objectives



Electronics Disposition

- **Zero landfill program since 1997:**
 - Redeploy-Redistribute-Recycle
- **Environmental impacts:**
 - Less toxics to the landfill, less landfill space used, less materials needed due to reuse
- **Human health impacts:**
 - Materials used in electronics are known carcinogens and suspected reproductive toxins. Pollution from mining and manufacturing is associated with cancer and birth defects.

Elimination of DEHP from NICUs

- **NICU Plastic products with DEHP replaced with non-DEHP products when available**
- **Environmental impacts:**
 - Step toward elimination of PVC plastics in health care – reduction of dioxin/furan environmental contamination from their manufacture and disposal
- **Human health impacts:**
 - DEHP is a reproductive toxin causing changes in the male reproductive organs. Dioxins from PVC mfg are highly potent human carcinogens.

Reduced Water/Energy Consumption by Buildings

- **Green buildings focus on resource conservation**
- **Environmental impacts:**
 - Less use of non-renewable energy sources, less use and need for processing of water.
- **Human health impacts:**
 - Cleaner water, cleaner air – less harmful chemicals needed to treat water and less illness associated with air pollution from energy manufacturing.

Green Cleaners

- **Replaced petroleum based cleaners with bio-based cleaners**
- **Environmental impacts:**
 - Less toxics to water, less use of non-renewable resources and pollution associated with petroleum extraction and processing
- **Human health impacts:**
 - Conventional cleaners contain asthmagens, irritants and carcinogens.

PVC Flooring Replacement

- **Non-PVC flooring now standard for construction and remodeling projects.**
- **Environmental impacts:**
 - Elimination of dioxin/furan production due to PVC manufacture. Reduced landfill impacts due to new recyclable flooring.
- **Human health impacts:**
 - New flooring requires no stripping and waxing – resulting in less exposure of workers to a very corrosive material. Less pollution and health effects associated with PVC mfg.

Mercury Elimination

- **Eliminated mercury from medical devices and facility equipment**
- **Environmental impacts:**
 - Elimination of mercury waste to water/landfill/hazardous waste disposal by mfg and user
- **Human health impacts:**
 - Mercury is a neurotoxin that accumulates in human body fat tissues – highest concentrations found in breast tissue and breast milk. Of particular vulnerability are infants and children.

Links and Connections

- **We believe there is a definite link between the environment and human health**
- **Kaiser Permanente’s mission includes “improving the health of the communities we serve”**
- **KP wants to drive the market toward products and processes that reduce the environmental impact of healthcare on the environment**

Thank You!

The End

Questions/Comments