

## Harris Methodist Fort Worth makes a splash with pollution prevention efforts

True to its Texas-size heart and ambitions, Premier member Harris Methodist Fort Worth Hospital (HMFW) is basking in the glow of its recent nationwide acclaim for a successful pollution prevention program. And it's even spreading the word on the widely popular "You Tube" Internet video site.

The sprawling, 710-bed hospital, one of the southeast's largest and busiest hospitals and regional referral centers, made a splash when it debuted the video at the 2007 Environmental Excellence

Summit hosted by Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E), a collaborative healthcare industry effort to promote environmental sustainability.



Harris Methodist earned H2E's prestigious Environmental Leadership award – the highest honor given to hospitals by H2E for outstanding environmental performance in waste reduction and pollution prevention. Only eight hospitals (only two in Texas) across the country earned the award. The hospital also received H2E's Making Medicine Mercury-Free Award for its outstanding efforts to eliminate mercury.

During the five-minute, 44-second [video](#), hospital staff are seen explaining the benefits of recycling to co-workers, "high-fiving" each other when tossing cans and paper into the blue and green recycle bins that permeate the facility, turning off televisions and lights in empty patient rooms and replacing light bulbs with energy efficient ones.



**From "You Tube" video: HMFW has drastically reduced its dependence on mercury, cutting down the pieces of mercury-containing devices from 359 in 2005 to only 31 today.**

So just what's all the brouhaha about? For starters, since launching its pollution prevention initiatives in 2005, HMFW has reduced its overall solid waste stream by 50 percent. It also has exceeded its overall recycling goal by recycling 41 percent of the overall waste stream; reduced energy consumption by five percent; reduced regulated medical waste generation by an average of 10 percent and eliminated 91 percent of mercury-containing devices and products from the facility.

The hospital also has increased purchasing of post-consumer recycled paper products and implemented a comprehensive waste avoidance and minimization program incorporating its environmental, waste management and purchasing policies.

Efforts were led by the hospital's "Green Team," a multidisciplinary team of employees dedicated to public and environmental health.

"We are strengthening our mission to improve the health of the people in the communities we serve by doing what we can to also strengthen the global environment," said Lillie Biggins, HMFW's vice president of operations. "We are embracing safer building products, energy conservation, clean air and reinforcing our commitment to public health by reducing waste and hazardous chemicals. I'm so proud of our employees and their dedication to these green efforts."



**Lillie Biggins and her Green Team: "I'm so proud of our employees and their dedication to these green efforts."**

Andre Williams, director of environmental services, said the close connection between patient care and a healthy environment is not lost on the hospital's 4,000-plus employees. "Harris Methodist Fort Worth Hospital is at the forefront of the trend toward a health care system that recognizes the fundamental link between healthy people and a healthy environment," Williams said. "It has been an honor to champion H2E's efforts at Harris, helping make Harris a leader in improving health care's environmental performance."

Here's a brief look at the hospital's successes to date:

- *General recycling efforts* – Williams told the *Fort Worth Business Press* that whenever possible, the hospital buys paper goods that are made up of at least 40 percent recycled material. A hospital compactor the hospital purchased in early 2006 crushes cardboard boxes, which are sold by HMFW to a local vendor for anywhere from \$30 to \$90 a ton. Williams said overall, the hospital's recycling efforts in 2006 netted more than \$100,000 in savings.
- *Hazardous chemical recycling* – HMFW also recycles or plans to recycle such hazardous chemicals as xylene and formalin. Xylene is either disposed of or filtered

to remove impurities and reused. Lisa Lingo, an HMFWS lab manager, told the *Fort Worth Business Press* she buys about 10 gallons of xylene every six months, an amount that could easily be cut in half with an even more efficient filtering system.

- *Mercury elimination* – HMFWS also has drastically reduced its dependence on mercury, cutting down the pieces of mercury-containing devices from 359 in 2005 to only 31 today.
- *Energy efficiencies* – The hospital’s pollution prevention efforts also have led to dramatic energy and water savings. For example, hospital restrooms have been retrofitted with sensor-activated faucets and towel dispensers to minimize water and paper use, and major A/C systems have been fitted with computerized controls. Bill Upton, engineering director, told the *Fort Worth Business Press* 10 percent savings on energy are easily attainable by any hospital through common sense changes. Upton estimates that HMFWS could potentially save more than \$800,000 of its \$8 million annual energy bill by taking simple steps such as turning off lights, televisions and making wise environmentally preferable purchasing choices.

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