

## Sample Employee Education Activity



### Schedule of Events Y.O.U.R. Company Earth Day Celebration

#### 8:30 a.m. Breakfast

*Employees who bring their own reusable plates, silverware, and mugs will receive a complimentary breakfast and coffee in the main lobby. Look for the posters in the lobby about reducing waste by reusing materials!*

#### 9:30 a.m. — 11:30 a.m. Community Tours

*Employee guides will lead facility tours for groups of community leaders and students, highlighting environmental stewardship activities.*

#### 12:00 — 2:00 p.m. Lunch Program

*Company-wide lunch in the cafeteria featuring a skit by the management team, tips for saving water from the City Department of Water and Sewer, and Earth Day Trivia with prizes up to \$150.*

#### 2:00 p.m. — 5:00 p.m. New Technologies Demonstrations

*Please visit the following demonstrations, beginning every half hour:*  
*Hybrid car demo in the back parking lot*  
*Landscape irrigation demo in the central courtyard*  
*Composting demo in the front parking lot/lawn*  
*Energy efficient computer tips at the main reception desk*

## Next steps to increase your profitability through environmental practices...

### Online Resources:

#### EPA WasteWise Tips for Employee Education:

[www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/wstewise/pubs/wwupda4.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/wstewise/pubs/wwupda4.pdf)

**List of Outreach Ideas:** [www.plasticsindustry.org/outreach/employee/ways.htm](http://www.plasticsindustry.org/outreach/employee/ways.htm)

**Strategies for Employee Education:** [www.greenbiz.com/toolbox/howto\\_third.cfm?LinkAdvID=4201](http://www.greenbiz.com/toolbox/howto_third.cfm?LinkAdvID=4201)

### Look in the BEA's How-To Guide Series for:

- #1: Developing an Environmental Policy Statement
- #2: Carrying Out an Environmental Assessment
- #3: Setting Environmental Goals and Objectives
- #4: Accessing Environmental Resources (Two Parts)
- #6: Evaluating Profitable Environmental Opportunities
- #7: Measuring Performance
- #8: Developing Continual Action Plans

**Disclaimer:** The information in this brochure is presented for the convenience of the reader. The information provided here is not intended to replace an EMS strategy and should not be used as the sole source for environmental strategies.



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## BEA How-To Guide #5:

# Educating Your Employees About Sound Environmental Practices



Photo by: Susan & Neil Silverman, Sonoma County, CA



"profitability through sound environmental practices"

Sonoma County  
Business Environmental Alliance

## How do we educate employees about environmental practices?

Depending on the size and focus of your business, educating your employees about environmental best practices might include anything from a single poster on the wall of your office to a daylong session or community event. Education projects include training, regular reminders, introduction of new techniques, and encouragement.

## How will educating employees benefit my business?

Your company can fully realize its environmental goals, and the associated economic benefits, if all of your employees are committed to sound environmental practices. Therefore, employee education is a critical step in improving your bottom line through improved environmental performance. Additional benefits include:

- ✓ improving compliance with environmental, health and safety regulations
- ✓ gaining a competitive advantage in marketing to and serving environmentally-conscious consumers
- ✓ improving employee morale and teamwork
- ✓ creating opportunities for outreach



## Who should be involved?

In order for an education program to be successful, executive management must be committed to communicating environmental best practices to employees. Staff at all levels of your organization should participate in the educational activities you choose to pursue, especially if there is no training or environmental compliance staff available.

## How do I get started?

**First**, identify which environmental topics to introduce to your employees. Identify your most important goals and objectives from your Environmental Policy Statement.

**Second**, ensure that managers are committed to the pursuit of environmental best practices and to the employee education programs that will support them.

**Third**, select a staff member or group to find ways, like those listed in this guide, to increase employee awareness of those topics and participation in your environmental practices.

## Which education projects are most likely to succeed?

### Special Events

One of the best ways to get employees thinking about the environmental impacts of their actions is to create a special event. Earth Day is a common time for companies to highlight their environmental commitment, but any day is appropriate. Time spent recognizing environmental practices at a special event signals to employees that environmental issues are critical to the company's mission. A successful special event will include some or all of the following components:

- ✓ Involvement by senior management
- ✓ High level of participation by employees
- ✓ Fun activities or other features (food, entertainment) that catch employees' attention and create a positive atmosphere
- ✓ Educational activities such as informational presentations, trivia games, and demonstrations about the environment
- ✓ Handouts or other "take-away" items like recycling bins and energy-efficient light bulbs
- ✓ Opportunities for employees' suggestions and comments

### Competitions

Another popular approach is to hold a competition that rewards employees who learn about and apply environmental best practices. Although many types of competition could be effective, the most important steps are linking the competition with clear environmental best practices, offering rewards to encourage participation and emphasize the value of environmental practices.

Host a trivia game at a company meeting, with questions about environmental practices

Plan resource-use competitions in which individuals or teams compete to reduce their use of water, energy, etc. or reduce their waste production over a period of time

Sponsor a contest to design environmental slogans, posters, or events for the company

Give an annual award for the most environmentally responsible employee, group, or division

### Formal Training

Human Resources or other employees, or even outside groups, can offer an orientation to new employees about your environmental practices, including recycling policies, commuting/carpooling options, and how to use equipment in the most environmentally friendly manner. After the initial training of new employees, continued formal training can take the form of workshops and seminars, brown-bag lunch sessions with members of local environmental groups, workshops on emerging technologies, or participation in certification programs.



### Communication

To keep employees engaged in using environmentally friendly practices, communication should be continuous. Constant reminders about environmental policies can be embedded in your existing methods of communication, whether they include daily public announcements, monthly newsletters, bulletin boards, or weekly company-wide email messages. To access the BEA's electronic communication tool, the weekly SURE! tip, visit [www.sonoma-county.org/bea/conservation.htm](http://www.sonoma-county.org/bea/conservation.htm).

### Community Partnerships

Your environmental policy is inherently linked to your commitment to improve your community. Therefore, community outreach and environmental best practices go hand in hand. You can increase the value of employee education by pairing it with community activities that showcase your environmental commitments to your customers, investors, and government representatives. Community partnerships that will educate your employees and the community include:

- ✓ Allowing employee volunteers to assist with local schools' Earth Day and/or Arbor Day celebrations
- ✓ Offering employee-guided tours of the environmental best practices at work in your facility
- ✓ Participating in local environmental advocacy movements
- ✓ Granting employees paid time off to participate in habitat clean-up/restoration efforts
- ✓ Sponsoring community recycling drives

Groups that might be contacted to make presentations or to provide training include utility companies, local, state, and federal environmental agencies, local environmental activists, higher educational institutions, and trade groups.

### Long-Term Opportunities

Some companies overlook the simplest way to educate their employees about sound environmental practices. Leading by example can be an inexpensive way to promote environmental practices. Companies can encourage carpooling, recycling bottles and cans, and reducing wasted paper, water, and electricity through simple actions like putting white-paper recycling bins at every office desk and posting a ride-share board.

## Environmental Education Checklist

- We communicate our environmental policies to all employees continuously.
- We highlight our environmental efforts through community partnerships.
- We have a special event dedicated to environmental best practices.
- We encourage participation through rewards and leadership by senior managers.