

## **Sanitary Service Company**

Sustainable Connections is a Northwest Washington network of local and independently owned businesses working to establish a Local Living Economy that sustains itself, our community and a healthy environment. Just barely 3 years old, their mission is to empower business and consumer behavior that promotes a vital community and a healthy environment, and their nearly 400 members in Whatcom and Skagit counties are committed to supporting Strong Community, a Healthy Natural Environment, Meaningful Employment and Buying Local First. Each month they'll highlight a member business in this column that is going the extra mile with their commitment to sustainability!

Sanitary Service Company, located at 1001 Roeder Avenue in Bellingham, not only maintains sustainable business practices, but works towards ensuring that our community will be a healthy one for years to come. The company has a contract with the city to handle much of the area's recycling needs. Beyond recycling, an already important variable in a healthy community, SSC has taken steps inside its business, as well as outside its business, to work towards a healthy and vibrant community.

Being members of Sustainable Connections has helped to further the company's goals of being involved in the community and adding to the quality of life here. They've also created a Sustainability Commitment with Sustainable Connections that acknowledges ways the locally owned business can maintain its sustainable integrity.

Rodd Pemble has instituted practices during his seven years as Recycling Manager at SSC that has put the company at the forefront of environmentally conscious businesses in the area.

With their close proximity to the ocean the company wanted to guarantee they could keep possible leaks and contamination onsite. To assure this, nine years ago SSC hired 20/20 Engineering, a local engineering firm, to compile a map of the site's drains and water entry points.

The company phased out the painting of trucks onsite as the practice could have led to contamination. Further, they got rid of the oil burner that heated their shops as they did not effectively control emissions.

Six years ago Mr. Pemble took an inventory of all the tools in the shop in an attempt to find environmentally friendly alternatives. The chlorinated brake cleaner was switched out for a non-chlorinated brake cleaner. Less toxic cleaners were used for cleaning their tools and an environmentally friendly graffiti remover was adopted. Actions such as these reduced waste, which led to an improvement in efficiency. Another follow-up evaluation will be done to find better alternatives for around eighty different tools, which adheres to the company's commitment in keeping up with the latest information.

Two SSC trucks run on an 80-20 bio-diesel mix and eventually they will have a tank onsite to store their own bio-diesel. Mr. Pemble also took steps to get the most out of their oil filters. By crushing the filters all the possible oil was removed, which allowed the oil to be recycled along with the filters themselves. In the near future they will retrofit their site's entire lighting system in a move from fluorescent lighting to T4 fixtures that will cut down on energy use.

The company is looking to include post consumer food and other compostables in its already successful yard waste program. Eventually SSC will be able to process tough recyclables such as wax paper, poly-coded materials, and aseptic materials that include items such as juice boxes, milk cartons, and soy milk cartons.

SSC also offers a Free Waste Assessment, which is an onsite evaluation of a company's waste facilities. Before a building permit is given the company needs to meet certain environmental criteria set forth by SSC.

Having taken the Whatcom Watershed Pledge, the company ensured that its practices would not harm our drinking water or waterways. Each truck is fitted with a spill kit that prevents leaks, such as hydraulic leaks, and helps to clean them up when they do happen. Two trucks respond to a spill incident, but in his 7 years at SSC there has not been a single incident.

“Businesses should not only keep up with the latest information on a community level, but should also be aware of industry specific information as well”, says Mr. Pemble. “No doubt there is someone working in your industry that works on waste management. It is not necessary to build a better mousetrap in order to be a sustainable and successful business; you just need to tap into what is out there in your industry.”

The actions of Sanitary Service Company have proven that with proper management and foresight, businesses can act in a sustainable manner while managing to be successful in practice!

By: Scott Pelton, Sustainable Connections Program Assistant