

# **SONOMA COUNTY**

## ***BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS REPORT (BEPR)***



**2001-2002**

**SPRING 2002**

*PREPARED BY*

*The Sonoma County Business Environmental Alliance*



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## I. Overview

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### **An Introduction to the Best Practices Project: *Business Environmental Progress Report***

The following report has been produced by the Sonoma County Business Environmental Alliance (BEA) to document and publicize the voluntary environmental policies and practices adopted by Sonoma County businesses. This annually updated document will act as a local benchmark—gauging changing environmental policies and trends over time. This report is part of a larger initiative, the **Best Practices Project**, which the BEA has been improving and expanding since 1998.

The **Best Practices Project** is a multi-faceted program, consisting of a series of interactive tools and reports aimed toward documenting and publicizing the positive voluntary environmental steps taken by local companies to improve both their business practices and financial performance. The project is also a resource for companies seeking information about strengthening and implementing voluntary environmental policies and practices.

The purpose of the **Best Practices Project** is to:

- Create awareness among senior managers that environmental considerations can provide financial benefits to business
- Provide concrete examples of how companies have achieved savings through environmental initiatives
- Illustrate different pathways to implementing environmental initiatives and obtaining environmentally-driven financial benefits
- Provide hands-on tools and ideas for companies that are beginning to explore sustainable practices
- Enhance communication and collaboration between business managers and environmental professionals in achieving constructive progress
- Serve as a benchmark to document progress over time, and detail environmental practices in Sonoma County

The **Best Practices Project** consists of:

- **Environmental Practices Self-Assessment:**  
An annually administered survey of the voluntary environmental practices of leading local businesses, the results of which form the basis of the *Business Environmental Progress Report*.
- **Business Environmental Progress Report (a.k.a. the BEPR):**  
An annually updated report on the voluntary environmental policies and practices of leading local businesses, derived from the *Environmental Practices Self-Assessment*, and extrapolated into an easily understood format which acts as a benchmark and reference for the community and individual businesses.
- **Best Practices Guide:**  
An annually updated guide detailing the best practices, and steps, that individual companies have taken to voluntarily implement more sustainable practices. The Guide also highlights the economic benefits that each organization has derived from implementing these policies and practices.
- **Internet Resource and How-To Guides:**  
An internet based guide to business-focused environmental resources, included are listings of business, government, and non-profit resources, as well as how-to guides to help businesses write and implement environmental policy statements, environmental management systems, and conservation tips and checklists.

The following report is the first annual **Sonoma County Business Environmental Progress Report**. During the coming years this report will act as a benchmark and resource for local businesses to showcase their voluntary good practices and act as an impetus to encourage more businesses to implement voluntary environmental policies and practices. We hope that readers find it useful and informative.

For more information about the Business Environmental Alliance and the Best Practices Project, please visit our website at [www.sonoma-county.org/bea](http://www.sonoma-county.org/bea) or contact [bea@sonoma-county.org](mailto:bea@sonoma-county.org)

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## II. Executive Summary

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The Sonoma County Business Environmental Progress Report synthesizes the results from the 2001 “*Sonoma County Best Practices Project: Voluntary Environmental Practices Self-Assessment*”, and provides recommendations for action.

This first Environmental Practices Self-Assessment survey drew a strong response rate of 18% from businesses in a variety of sectors. The self-assessment consisted of a written survey sent out to about 330 leading companies from over twenty sectors in Sonoma County.

Analysis of survey data for this report revealed a number of **key themes**:

- Most businesses have taken tangible steps to reduce their level of resource consumption: 92% of respondents have taken steps to reduce their energy consumption and 53% of responding businesses conserve water through reduced use or water recycling.
- Area businesses are interested in improving their voluntary environmental policies and practices. 69% of respondents have expressed interest in information-sharing about model practices, and within the near future 53% intend to have Environmental Management Systems in place (16% already do).
- Market and social trends have increased, and will continue to influence, the voluntary adoption of environmentally sound policies and practices.

CEO’s report that they are pursuing these steps for a number of reasons, including: cost-saving potential, desire to contribute to a healthy environment, the benefits for employee morale, the desire to be the best in their field, and to “do the right thing”.

As the *Best Practices Project* and the Business Environmental Progress Report develop, the BEA looks forward to annually documenting and promoting the voluntary environmental practices of local businesses. For the 2001-2002 Annual BEPR report the BEA has identified a number of **key recommendations and opportunities** for area businesses and resource groups:

- Bring trade groups and chambers together to conduct sector-specific surveys within their membership, yielding a broader, deeper BEPR for 2002-2003
- Continually improve and expand the BEPR, as well as provide resources to firms that desire information on how to improve their scores on the BEPR
- Work with other organizations and programs that support business development to provide entrepreneurs looking to expand or start a business in Sonoma County with information about developing an EMS and voluntarily adopting sound, financially beneficial, environmental practices
- Focus on voluntary business water and energy conservation through workshops, newsletters, internet resources and other forms of outreach
- Increase the percentage of reported positive environmental practices by an average of 5% next year
- Publicize the link between instituting voluntary sound environmental practices and economic benefits
- Provide assistance for participating companies to work toward certification with ISO 14001 or similar voluntary environmental standards

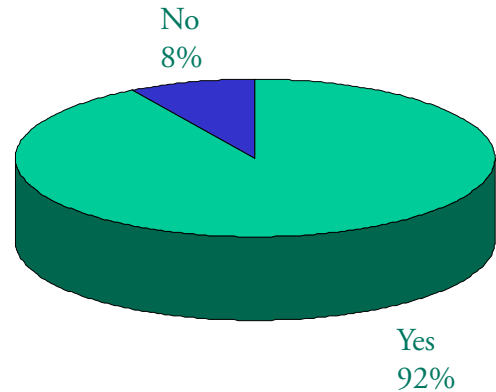
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### III. Survey Results and Analysis

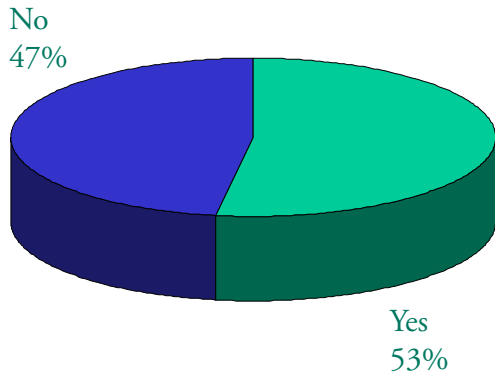
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#### Question 1: Does your company pursue any voluntary practices for energy conservation?

During the past year many businesses have become more aware of resource issues through the experience of energy shortages. 92% of responding companies report curtailing energy consumption through voluntary practices. The most common methods for reducing electricity consumption include increasing employee awareness and involvement, turning down or off lighting and HVAC systems, and lighting retrofits.



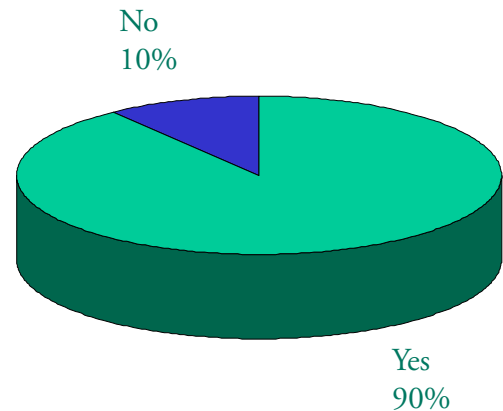
#### Question 2: Does your company pursue any voluntary practices for water conservation and/or water recycling?



More than 50% of the responding businesses have taken steps to conserve or reuse water. This is encouraging, although more progress must be made in the future in light of continuing growth and increasing water infrastructure stress. The most common methods cited to conserve and/or recycle water include: employee education and training, recycling water, installing automated and low flow equipment.

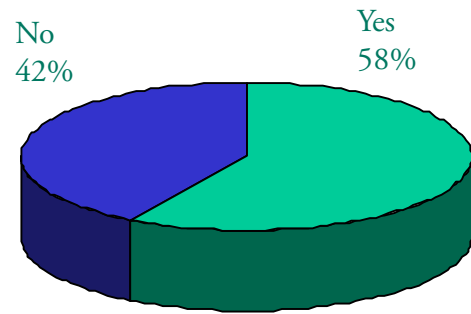
#### Question 3: Are your employees encouraged to take part in and suggest improvements to the company's environmental management policies?

It is important to involve employees in company environmental initiatives. Training and clarity of responsibilities and expectations, are important to the success of an environmental management program. Almost all responding companies encourage their employees to take part in and suggest improvements to the companies' environmental management policies (90%). The most common methods cited for increasing employee involvement include: suggestion boxes/open-door policies, conservation committees, and making known an executive-level commitment to implementing environmental policies and practices.

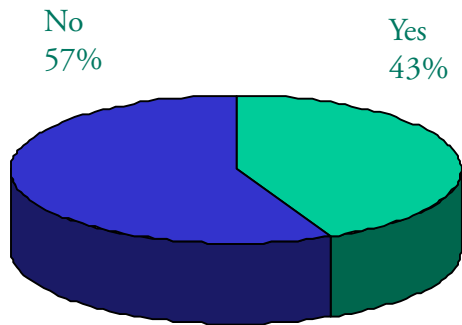


**Question 4: Does your company track environmental costs to reference internal decision making?**

Fifty-eight percent of responding businesses report fully (24%) or partially (34%) tracking environmental costs to reference their internal decision making processes. Tracking environmental costs can take many forms, from detailed databases and computer tracking to simply reviewing bills and keeping track of how much capital is being expended for projects and supplies. By monitoring how much a business is using and how much is being spent over time on specific resources, it is easier to see which areas are increasing or decreasing and to target for conservation or savings initiatives.



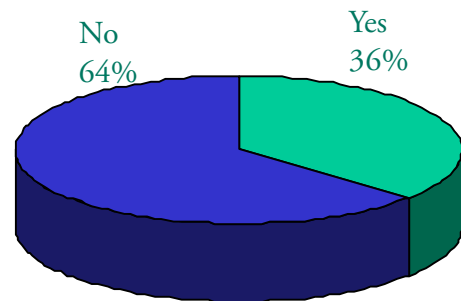
**Question 5: Has your company articulated voluntary environmental targets (e.g. written goal for reducing electricity consumption by 20% in one year.)?**



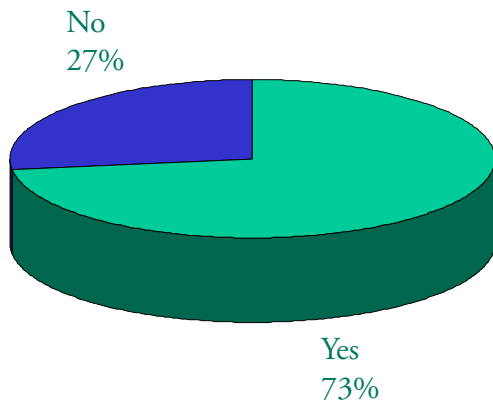
Forty-three percent of responding companies have articulated environmental targets. Environmental targets are quantifiable goals and targets that can help companies deliver visible environmental benefits and demonstrate continuous improvement. While each company's targets may be different, common examples include reducing energy consumption by 10% over a year long period, reducing waste collection costs by 50% through recycling and reduction practices, and many other practices.

**Question 6: Has your company established a written environmental policy statement?**

According to ISO 14001, an environmental policy statement is, “a statement by the organization of its intentions and principles in relation to its overall environmental performance which provides a framework for action and for the setting of its environmental objectives and targets.” Thirty-six percent of responding businesses have a written environmental policy statement.



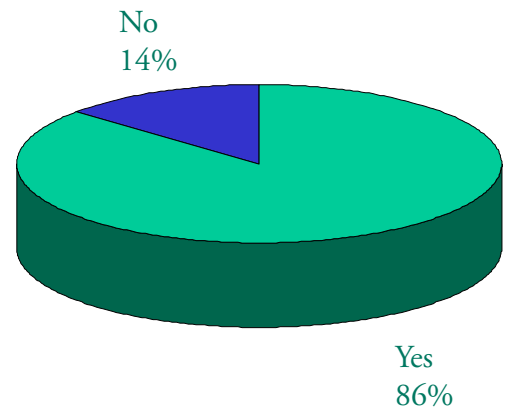
**Question 7: Is there a staff member or members charged with your company's environmental responsibilities?**



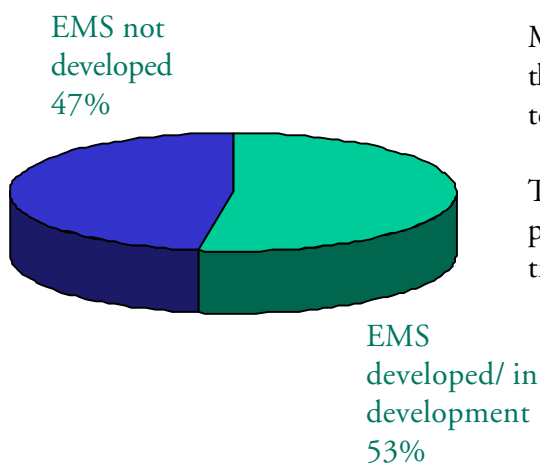
About 3/4 (73%) of companies report having a management member with responsibility for environmental issues. The designation of a staff member to oversee a company's environmental responsibilities helps ensure that environmental impacts are being considered by management. Support of this type is very important to the success of a company's environmental program.

**Question 8: Is your company more aware of resource issues or environmental issues than it was three years ago? If yes, why?**

Eighty-six percent of responding Sonoma County businesses reported being more aware of resource or environmental issues than they were three years ago. Many pointed to the 2000-2001 energy crisis for bringing resource issues to their attention while others noted increasing societal, scientific, and economic awareness of environmental issues as informing their business practices.



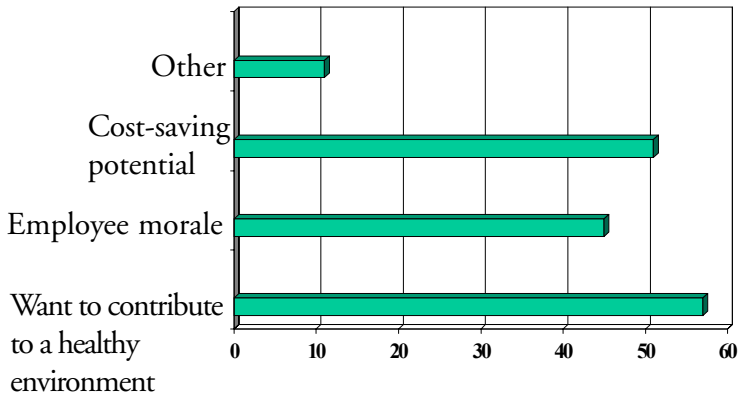
**Question 9: To what extent has your company developed a formal Environmental Management System?**



More than half of responding companies (53%) indicate that they have developed some sort of environmental management system (EMS).

The EMS is an important adjunct to the ISO 14001, and is particularly important for companies doing business internationally.

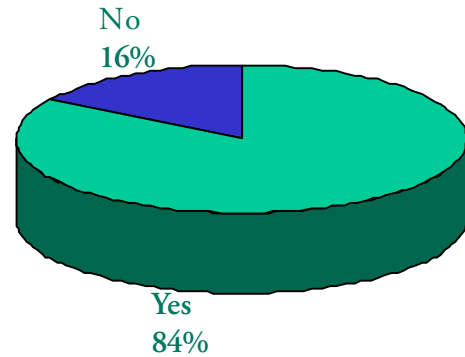
**Question 10: Why is your company interested in voluntarily adopting sound environmental practices? (please check all that apply.)**



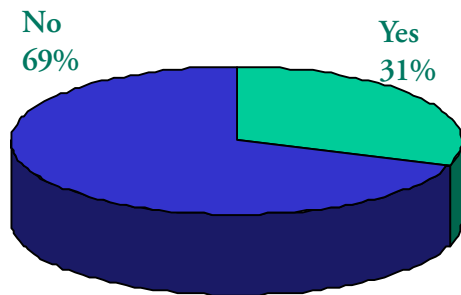
Companies voluntarily adopt sound environmental practices for many reasons. Responding companies were asked to check all of the reasons that they voluntarily adopt sound environmental practice. Of the choices offered, “wanting to contribute to a healthy environment” garnered the most responses (57 responses), but was closely followed by the “cost saving potential of environmental practices” (51 responses) and “wanting to positively impact employee morale” (45 responses). Others wrote in their reasons for adopting sound environmental practices, most commonly cited reasons include: a desire to “do the right thing”, and be the best in the field.

**Question 11: Are the environmental impacts of your company’s products, processes, and/or services taken into consideration?**

Eighty-four percent of respondents report taking their company’s environmental impacts into consideration. The main drivers behind this appear to be risk management, legislation and product stewardship.

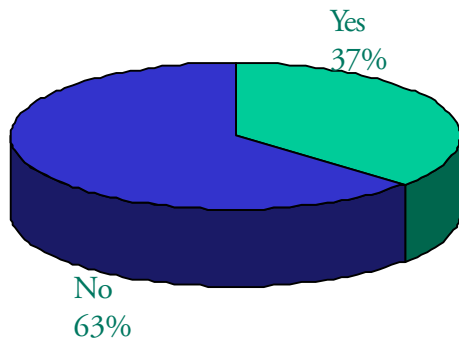


**Question 12: Does your company incorporate environmental criteria into its selection of goods and services suppliers?**



About one third (31%) of responding firms report that environmental criteria are taken into consideration in their selection of goods and services suppliers.

**Question 13: Are your company's positive environmental practices certified by an assessment or evaluative process?**

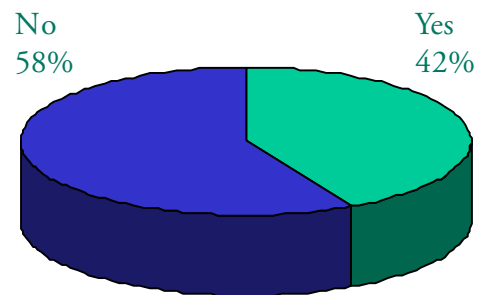


Nearly 40% of respondents have some form of voluntary environmental assessment process in place.

A voluntary environmental assessment, similar to any other business assessment, is a useful way for businesses to evaluate their performance and highlight areas for improvement. There are many templates available for a business implementing an environmental audit, from short “snapshots” (e.g. the BEPR) to comprehensive certification programs such as ISO 14001.

**Question 14: Is information about your company's positive environmental practices publicly available or publicized?**

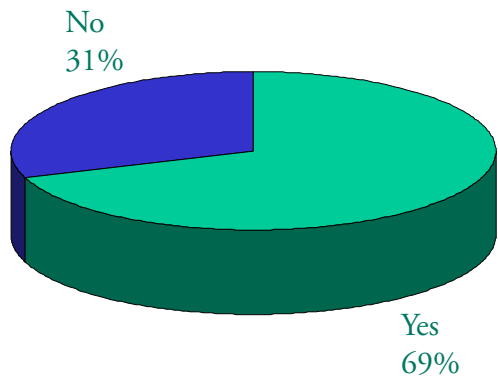
More than 40% of companies have publicly available information about their positive environmental practices. With outreach and support, this figure could be raised dramatically in Sonoma County.



**Question 15: What are the greatest challenges to voluntarily increasing the environmental efficiency and reducing resource consumption of your organization?**

Respondents were asked to submit a list of their greatest challenges to increasing environmental efficiency and reducing resource consumption of their organizations. The most commonly cited difficulties included **cost and budget restrictions, the need for education to overcome complacency on the part of employees and stakeholders, and continual changes in other variables such as location and equipment that make it difficult to increase efficiency over the long term.**

**Question 16: Would your company be interested in meeting with other companies to share or to learn voluntary model practices and/or participate in a group to electronically share information?**



A high percentage of responding companies, 69%, signified interest in electronically sharing information about model practices. Collaborative approaches to environmentally sound practices, such as information sharing, make the learning and implementation processes easier and less intimidating for many companies.

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## IV. Methodology

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This self-assessment survey was developed after researching many programs and surveys with similar environmental benchmarking goals, including: CERES, ISO 14001, Deloitte Touche Corporate Environmental Score Card, and many others. It helps firms to profile their progress and see opportunities for further improvement. It retains the critical themes that are common to the majority of similar environmental programs but has been tailored to fit Sonoma County's environment and economy. The format of the report is based on Sonoma County Economic Development Board and Business Environmental Alliance standard reports.

The companies invited to take part in the BEA survey are a composite of the Press Democrat "Top 300" and selected other leading local firms. It is hoped that currently participating businesses and others will take part in consecutive years, and compare year-to-year performance as an indicator of the effectiveness and continuous improvement of their environmental programs.

The Business Environmental Alliance makes no claim that the information presented in this report is an accurate reflection of the environmental excellence of every company in Sonoma County. In written surveys such as this one, the responding companies are often likely to be those businesses that are already environmentally aware. When reading this report, the Business Environmental Alliance advises readers to consider this possibility.

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## V. Acknowledgements

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Many people contributed their valuable time and ideas to this project. Without the help of these individuals, this study would have been impossible to complete.

Most recognition belongs to the companies who chose to participate in this survey. This display of commitment will play an important role in influencing and encouraging other Sonoma County companies to voluntarily embrace the challenges and rewards of sound environmental practices that enhance financial performance.

The EDB staff contributed a considerable amount of work and Arianne Sperry and Erin Williams deserve special thanks. They helped bring the idea of the BEPR to fruition, analyzed the results of the survey, and formatted the final product.

This report is a testament to the interest and motivation of the members of the BEA Steering Committee. They provided valuable insight as well as enthusiasm. The time and energy they devoted is greatly appreciated.

*Ben Stone, Executive Director  
Sonoma County Economic Development Board*

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## VI. Appendix: Representative List of Responding Companies

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3M  
Advanced Fibre Communications (AFC)  
Agilent Technologies  
Air Monitor Corporation  
Bank of America\*\*  
Basin Street Properties  
Bibbero Systems  
Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District  
Dataflow  
Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center, Rohnert Park  
Dry Creek Vineyards\*\*  
First Union Securities  
Geyser Peak Winery  
Hansel Enterprises  
Health Plan of the Redwoods  
Keegan and Coppin Co., Inc.  
Komag Material Technology\*\*  
Luther Burbank Savings  
Medtronic AVE  
Microsource, Inc.  
Next Level Communications  
Nokia  
Petaluma Poultry  
Press Democrat  
Ralph's Supermarkets  
Reliance Trailer Manufacturing  
Ritz Foods  
Santa Rosa Junior College  
Schurter, Inc.\*\*  
Sonoma County Hilton (starwood hotels)  
Sonoma Valley Hospital  
State Farm Insurance  
Summit State Bank  
Verticom  
Winzler and Kelly Consulting

\*\*Starred companies are featured in the BEA Best Practices Guide. See the next page for an example of the entries in the Best Practices Guide, or visit our website [www.sonoma-county.org/bea](http://www.sonoma-county.org/bea) to learn more about the steps that individual businesses have taken to implement more sustainable practices and derivative financial benefits.

# Schurter, Inc.

Energy  
Packaging  
Recycling  
Reuse  
Waste Reduction  
Water  
Water

## Business Type Manufacturing

# of Employees 30

Contact Name Jane McMaster or Bill Cardoza

Phone 707-744-7469

Email info@schurterinc.com

## Bottom Line Savings

- Indirect savings through various conservation efforts.
- Lower trash pickup fees because we have a small amount for collection.

### Energy

- Implemented a formalized plan to reduce energy use by up to 20%.
- Use fluorescent bulbs, reduce to half-lighting, and turn off specific lights in the warehouse in compliance with requests to do so on hot days.
- Keep thermostats at 76 degrees to cool; 68 degrees to heat.
- Use programmable thermostats (off at night and weekends).
- Use ceiling fans in warehouse to circulate air.
- Applied UV film on sun-facing windows of the building.

### Packaging

- Receive previously-used packing peanuts from three other companies.
- Reuse and recycle shipping pallets, packing material.

### Recycling/Reuse & Waste Reduction

- Reclaim plastics and metal from obsolete electronic parts.
- Reuse and recycle office machine supplies.
- Recycle plastic, paper, glass, and aluminum in kitchen area; employees encouraged to bring recyclable and reusable materials from home.
- Donate or recycle computer equipment; no parts are thrown away.
- Photocopy on both sides of paper; use scrap paper for notepads.
- Donate to charities that request old furniture or office supplies.
- Donate supplies to Bay Area Creative Reuse Warehouse for teachers to use.
- Give cardboard corner pallet protectors to other companies.
- Keep for re-shipping or send wooden shipping pallets back to the airport for shipment (as a co-op agreement with shipping company).

### Water

- Use water-saving toilets.

## Best Practices