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Our Commitment to Quality ~ Amy Bettis



Jen Schloesser presents QMS training to key personnel

At Empire we are committed to our core values—Respect, Integrity, Responsibility, Continual Improvement and Knowledge. During the week of December 14, 2015 we reinforced that commitment to those values when we trained key personnel in the implementation of our Quality Management System or QMS. This training effort was spearheaded by Empire's Creative Director, Jennifer Schloesser. She presented the QMS training with the help of Cathy Buttell (Art) and Amy Bettis (HR), as shown in above photo.

The following employees participated in QMS training.

Diane Simonson	Keith Cook	Andy Kiedrowski
Kathy Vaughan	Doug Billings	Alexis Marsh
John Freismuth	Lee Vieth	Guy Gregerson
Steve Nelson	Jim Weber	Steve Stenberg
Sheila Fox	Shane Hulburt	Steve Johnson
John Johnson	Trish Lastofka	

Our QMS creates a central location for all Empire documentation. By doing so, we are creating easy access to information. Is this something that will happen overnight? No, it is just the start of developing something better. The days of stuff tacked on bulletins boards, copies saved in numerous 3-ring binders, miscellaneous files saved on desktops around the plant and tribal knowledge will be gone. The goal is to have all our key information and processes documented in the QMS by September 2016

Our QMS will also make the audit process much simpler when it comes to ISO, Green Tier, safety and suppliers. Empire continues to move forward and improve our products and service through the QMS.



SAFETY AWARENESS NEWS

7 Deadly Sins of Safety

~ Courtesy of safetycompliancealert.com

Lock Out Tag Out ~ Amy Bettis

In accordance with our core value of continuous improvement Empire is stepping up efforts with our Lock Out Tag Out (LOTO) program. In the next few weeks the guys in the Machine Shop and Maintenance, Electrical and HVAC will be performing energy audits for all our equipment. That is no easy feat. We have a lot of equipment!

These audits will document how we safely control energy during LOTO procedures for all equipment. That information will be incorporated into our written LOTO policy which is

saved under the policies folder in our Quality Management System (QMS).

Additional LOTO supplies have been purchased and a central location outside of the Machine Shop is being established for storage. Lock out devices will be color coded, so that we can identify at a glance what department placed the device on the equipment.

Maint./Electrical/HVAC	Green
Machine Shop	Red
Plant Supervisors	Yellow

IRRESPONSIBILITY: Intentional disregard for what you know you should be doing in regards to safety and required personal protective equipment (PPE). A cavalier attitude your fellow employees will not appreciate.

IGNORANCE: Failure to ask how to complete an unfamiliar task safely, because "I didn't know how." is not an acceptable excuse. *For the record, there is not an acceptable excuse where safety is concerned.*

TOLERANCE: What you permit you promote. How often have you seen someone doing something not entirely safe and ignored the issue and didn't speak up, because it is not 'your department or your job'?

WILLFULLNESS: This is the worst violation. As the name suggests, it's willingly doing something hazardous or unsafe, such as not following LOTO procedures.

PROCRASTINATION: Why fix it now, when you can fix it later? Because it is unsafe and you or a co-worker can get hurt. If it impacts safety in any way ALWAYS fix it first!

CARELESSNESS: Ever have a minor accident because you didn't think or were too rushed? Take time to think so that minor problems don't become major ones. Slow down, there is always time for safety.

COMPLACENCY: When we have performed the same daily tasks over and over again we get lulled into a false sense of security that nothing bad will ever happen. Safe work practices need to become as much of a habit as performing the task itself.

GHS/HazCom Training ~ Amy Bettis

During the week of January 25th ALL Empire employees were required to attend GHS/Hazcom training. The ONLY employees who were not required to attend training were those who took part in new employee orientation this past fall. If unsure whether you still need this training or not please call Amy Bettis at x2371.

Employees took part in a specific 1 hr. session, at which they were required to take a test following the presentation. If you are absent during that week for whatever reason, you will be required to reschedule and make up the training with Training Coordinator, Amy Bettis.

In observance of our written HazCom policy, OSHA guidelines and industry accepted best safety practices this and other safety trainings will be reviewed and retested on an annual basis, per John Freismuth.



Solvent is just one item under the control of GHS

safety committee

Safety Coordinator:

Keith Cook..... R & D

Committee Members:

Lee Vieth..... Plant Manager

John Johnson..... Operations Coord.
 Autum Jacobs..... Human Resources
 Sheri Noble..... Insurance Agent
 Dawn Adamson..... Accounting

Amy Bettis..... HR/Training Coord.
 Nancy Gilbertson..... Customer Service
 Curtis Johnson..... IT Department
 Jay Yehle..... Heating/Cooling

OSHA Increasing Penalties ~ Courtesy of National Safety Compliance, Inc.

On November 3rd it was announced that the Federal Budget Agreement, is authorizing OSHA to increase penalties for the first time since 1990.

OSHA fines had previously been limited by the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act of 1990. This freeze on financial penalty increases has been in place for the last 25 years.

This new agreement requires OSHA to make a one-time “catch-up” increase to compensate for the more than two decades of no increases. The catch-up increase can't exceed the inflation rate from 1990 through 2015 as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is expected to be around 82%.

Assuming OSHA applies the maximum catch-up increase allowed, the current maximum \$70,000 fine for a Repeat and Willful violation would grow to as much as \$125,000 each. The new act does include a potential exception to the increases. OSHA is allowed to forego following the guidelines if “increasing the civil monetary penalty by the otherwise required amount will have a negative economic impact [on America]” or “the social costs of increasing the civil monetary penalty by the otherwise required amount outweigh the benefits.” This language gives OSHA considerable latitude to apply these fines as they see fit.

After the one-time “catch-up” increase is implemented, OSHA

will annually increase maximum penalties at a rate equal to the rate of inflation for the prior fiscal year.

OSHA has not yet commented on this development and it is not clear whether it will choose to increase penalties to the full extent allowed. However, based on the consistent comments from the current OSHA administration about the benefits of stiffer regulatory punishments, it's highly likely that they will implement most, if not all, of the increases.

The initial penalty increases must become effective by August 1, 2016, but we should expect to learn well before then the extent to which OSHA will increase these penalties and fines. The Federal Office of Management and Budget is expected to issue guidance on implementing the bill's provisions by January 31, 2016.

What Should Employers Do Now?

Employers may have several months to anticipate these higher penalties, but action on safety should begin immediately. Workplace safety has benefits that go beyond avoiding expensive penalties. Workplace safety protects workers, improves morale and can actually help the bottom line profits for all workplaces. Rather than just treating safety as an expense, management should work to develop a business plan to achieve safety goals, avoid fines, and reduce insurance expense and lost time.

November Sleep Challenge ~ Amy Bettis



Kathy was the sleep challenge winner

Many of us who participated in the past H/W challenge know we need to get adequate sleep each night. This challenge made each of us realize just what that point is between not enough or too much sleep. The average adult needs 7-8 hours of sleep to function well. Hopefully this challenge will allow you to make the lifestyle changes to promote a healthier lifestyle.

Kathy Vaughan's sheet was drawn from all submitted trackers. She won a cozy throw, assorted teas, bumper bottle, lunch kit and a 'sweet dreams' sleep mask—nighty nite!

'Soup'er Hero Day

~ Chris Schultz



Sam is 5 yrs. old and the youngest of 4 children to Ryan and Angie Dahl of Holmen, WI. Sam was diagnosed with Medulloblastoma (Brain Tumor) at the end of February 2015. He's undergone 8 weeks of Proton Radiation Therapy in Houston, TX and is currently having Chemo Treatments at Gundersen La Crosse. Monies and proceeds made from cook-off will be donated to Sam.

A New H.O.P.E. ~ Amy Bettis

An employee driven initiative—H.O.P.E. is taking shape at Empire. The acronym stands for Helping Out People Everyday. Funds raised by H.O.P.E. will be used to aid fellow employees in need. For example, an employee is struggling to a winter coat for their child, H.O.P.E. could help. An employee team is determining exactly how these funds will be used and distributed. More details to follow as this employee project moves forward.

"Our Hats Off to You"

~ Ellen Klug



The end of January marked a successful “Our Hats Off to You!” silent auction benefitting H.O.P.E. An eclectic assortment of 57 hats was offered up for auction. Bidding was fierce on several hats, some of which sported celebrity autographs.

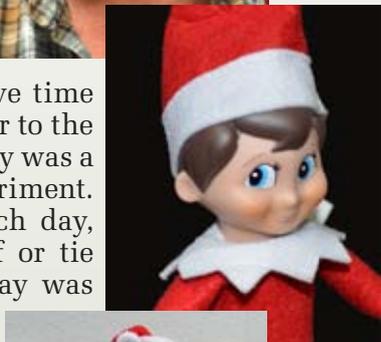
A total of \$350 was raised. To honor your winning bid please bring your cash(\$ bid to Ellen Klug (x2340) in the Art Dept. between 8:00am-4:00pm. Thank you for supporting H.O.P.E.'s latest fundraiser!

T.E.A.M. Notes ~ Marilyn Heinz

When Rose Chamoun (LVS 1st shift) suggested T.E.A.M. participate in the “No Shave November”, we did. A banner was created with some of our bearded co-workers and a few recognizable bearded celebrities featuring only their noses and chins. The first eight people to correctly identify all the faces won a prize. (Top photo, always irreverently bearded, Jim Weber, Stockcutting.)



December was a festive time at Empire. The week prior to the employee Christmas Party was a time for dress up and merriment. Monday was green grinch day, Tuesday was sock, scarf or tie accessory day, Wednesday was sporting day, Thursday was holiday hat day and Friday was tacky sweater/outrageous outfit. Maria Selezneva, (bottom photo) won the traveling trophy for most outrageous outfit.



TEAM participated in the talent show at the Christmas party by reading an Empire adaptation of The Night before Christmas. We inserted the words “left” and “right” within the story line and a small wrapped present on each table was shifted to the “left” or “right” as directed. The last person at each table

to hold the present, kept it.

Food pantry donations were also collected at the Christmas party and stocking the shelves for Empire’s employee food pantry began. “Roy”, an Elf on the Shelf (center photo) made his debut. The rules were simple; locate Roy in his hiding spot, have your photo taken with him, then disguise him and hide him in a new spot. The photos were shared on Empire’s Facebook page. Britney Henkel (SVS 2nd shift) was the last person to locate Roy before the holidays, so he went home with her to celebrate with her family.

The New Year started with “Our Hats Off To You” silent auction when an employee graciously donated his collection of new baseball hats. The auction ran through January. All proceeds will go to an employee assistance program.

In order to keep fresh new perspectives, TEAM. had a sign up for all employees interested in becoming a member for one year. We welcomed new members Maria Selezneva, Jim Brom and Ellen Klug and look forward to their input. As always, if you have team inspired idea, please contact Chris Schultz, Amy Bettis, Autum Jacobs, Doug Billings or myself.

Training & Conference Room Policy ~ Amy Bettis

As Empire grows, so do the number of meetings, kaizens and trainings needed to maintain the high level of service we provide our customers.

The use of the training room and the small conference room must be reserved with our receptionist. Along with your reservation request, please provide a list of those employees attending the scheduled event in either of those two rooms.

Scheduling these rooms through our receptionist serves a two-fold purpose. First, it prevents the double-booking of the space. Second, if our receptionist is made aware of who is

in attendance, she can avoid interrupting meetings with pages, allowing those involved to concentrate on the job at hand.

Please be aware that there are a variety of regularly scheduled meetings each week such as traction and lean steering, plus a handful of monthly meetings like green or safety committees, that you may need to work around.

As a courtesy to the receptionist and your fellow employees please take the time to book your next meeting, kaizen or training in the training or conference rooms.

Empire Photo Op



Angie Severson loves celebrating a milestone b-day with her co-workers



Christmas decorating dynasty—Engineering, Purchasing & Expediting (L-R) Josh Parr, Ava Grimslid, Sheldon True, Chad Heyroth, Nancy Gilbertson, Maria Selezneva, Lori Taube, Shia Lee & Levi Adank



Carina Olson & Keith Cook receive the Incredible Hulking Holiday Award for the most creative use of their space



Santa pays a visit to Jim Brush at the company Xmas Party. Check out all the pictures on our Empire Screen Printing Facebook page

How Scrap Metal Can Benefit the Community

~ Information courtesy of Gateway Area Council, Boy Scouts of America

Boy Scouts of America—Gateway Area Council (GAC) needs your help raising money to support youth enrichment programs in Southwestern Wisconsin. Each year the GAC hosts a Scrap-a-thon to collect and recycle scrap metal.

Local Boy Scouts will be on hand at the La Crosse County Landfill on June 4, 2016 from 9:00am-noon to accept scrap metal donations from area households and local businesses. Scouts are looking for:

- Restaurants and pubs that are willing to donate cans or any scrap
- Scout families with scrap metal
- Manufacturers with scrap metal
- Community members with scrap metal

- Spring cleaners with Scrap!
- **ANYONE with scrap metal!**

What can you donate—Any metal EXCEPT those than contain freon (i.e. refrigerators, dehumidifiers, air conditioners)

- Good Stuff: brass, copper, aluminum, steel
- Washers and Dryers
- Ovens
- Aluminum cans
- Rain gutters
- Engine blocks, break pads, rotors...
- old machinery
- metal fencing
- metal shelving
- metal roofing
- old metal sheds

- old bicycles
- wheel barrels
- old metal desks
- file cabinets
- bed frames

Please contact Tammy Schmitz at the Scout office for more details: 608-784-4040. Or show up at the La Crosse County Landfill on Saturday, June 6th between 9am and noon with your scrap! You may also bring your recyclable metal to Runde Metal Recycling on June 6th or any time throughout the year and donate all or part of your check to Scouting! Thank you for your support!

La Crosse County Landfill

6500 State Road 16 , La Crosse, WI 54601
(608) 785-9572

Can Saving Energy be as Simple as Turning Off a Switch?

~ Information courtesy of American Scientific Magazine and US Department of Energy

So you bought a compact fluorescent lightbulb in a bid to be green. Such bulbs are vastly more energy-efficient than traditional incandescents and screw into standard sockets. Should you treat them like their older cousins?

After all, four- and eight-foot- (1.2- and 2.4-meter-) long tubular bulbs common in more institutional settings are sometimes left on permanently, perhaps due to their slow, flickering start-ups. The thinking is that the boost of energy such bulbs require to power up means that it might be best to keep them on when leaving a room, rather than subjecting them to the stress of a restart on your return.

Turns out, however, that power surge is so brief that its energy draw doesn't amount to much: the equivalent of a few seconds or so of normal operation, according to U.S. Department of Energy estimates. In other words, from a strict energy-conservation standpoint, it's almost always beneficial to shut off fluorescents when leaving the room—the start-up energy is offset by the power saved in even the briefest outages.

Turning off fluorescent lights for more than 5 seconds will save more energy than will be consumed in turning them back on again. Therefore, the real issue is the value of the electricity saved by turning the light off relative to the cost of changing a lightbulb.

But what about the wear and tear on the bulb itself? Being too switch-happy reduces the operating life of the lamp, and given that newer fluorescents are still a few times more expensive than old-fashioned incandescents, it makes sense to forestall burnouts. There are also real environmental impacts of their



production and disposal to consider.

A simple rule of thumb that balances both concerns is to shut off fluorescents: **if you're planning to leave a room for more than five minutes**, according to Francis Rubinstein, a staff scientist in the Building Technologies Department at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's Environmental Energy Technologies Division. Mary Beth Gotti, manager of the GE Lighting & Electrical Institute in Cleveland, agrees. For all practical purposes, **"it almost always makes sense to turn the lights off,"**

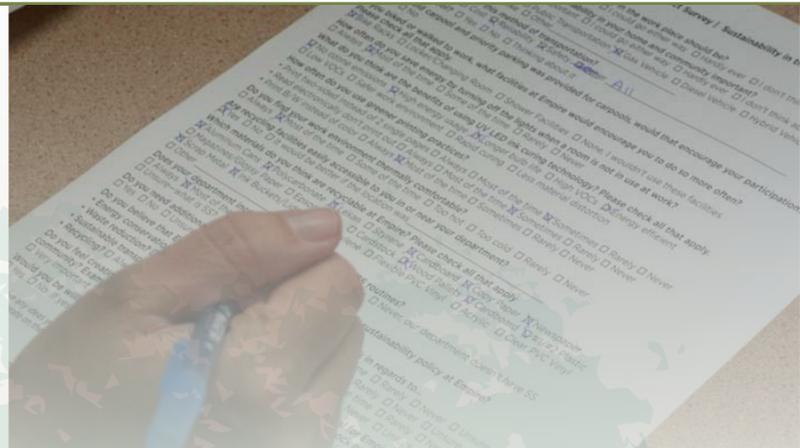
Gotti says. "From an environmental standpoint, the best way to save energy is to turn off the things that you're not using."

Rubinstein notes that, even for fluorescents, the cost of electricity over a bulb's lifetime far outpaces the cost of the bulb itself. "Even if you switch on and off a fluorescent light frequently," he says, "the slight reduction in lamp life is a small effect relative to the energy savings you accomplish by being a good citizen." Gotti adds that the reduction in lamp life from frequent on-and-off switching can often be counterbalanced by the extension of "calendar life"—the actual passage of time between lightbulb replacements—that results from using the bulb for fewer hours.

That sort of calculation will probably become more common as compact fluorescent lightbulbs come down in price, cast more pleasant light and, most importantly, force their power-hungry competitors from store shelves. The Australian government will phase out the sale of traditional incandescents in that country by 2010, and the U.S. Congress has effectively mandated the same ban domestically by 2012. **That new fluorescent bulb is sure to lower utility bills in your home, but the real energy-crunch savior has been there all along: the light switch.**

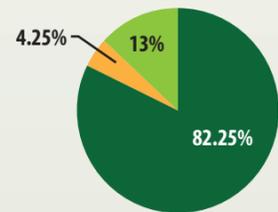


Empire Green Committee (L-R): Cathy Buttell, Amy Bettis, Keith Cook, Amanda Henthorne, Jennifer Schloesser, Jeff Gierok and Ray Wurzel.



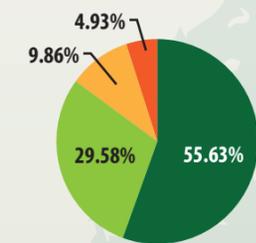
Empire MPower Survey Results ~ Empire Green Committee

How important do you think sustainability in the workplace should be?



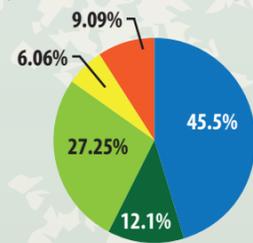
Very Important
Somewhat important
Indifferent
Don't think about it

Do you consider promoting sustainability in your home and community important?



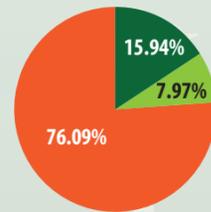
Very Important
Somewhat important
Indifferent
Don't think about it

Over 94% of employees use a gas powered car. Why do you choose this method of transportation?



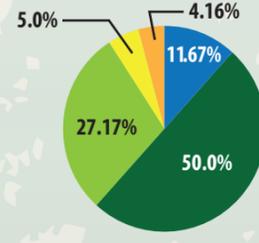
Convenience
Cost
Reliability
Safety
Other

Do you carpool?



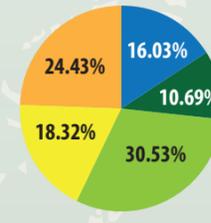
Yes
No
Thinking about it

Greener printing practices—read electronically don't print out



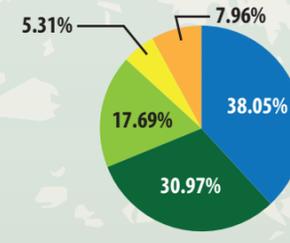
Always
Most of the time
Some of the time
Rarely
Never

Greener printing practices—printing 2-sided copies instead of single pages



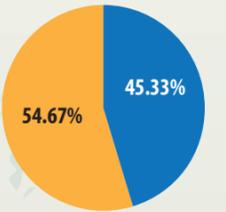
Always
Most of the time
Some of the time
Rarely
Never

Greener printing practices—print in B/W instead of in color



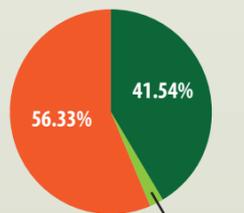
Always
Most of the time
Some of the time
Rarely
Never

Percentage of employees who completed the survey.



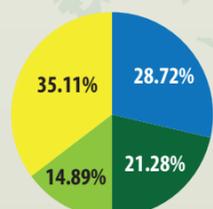
Completed survey
Did not participate

Would priority parking for people who carpool encourage you to carpool?



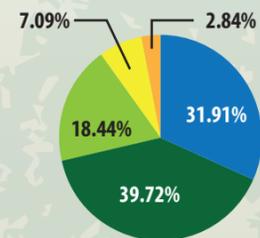
Yes
No
Maybe

If you biked or walked to work, what facilities at Empire would encourage you to do so more often?



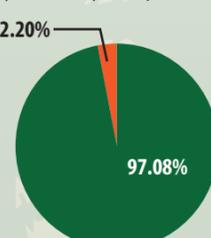
Bike Racks
Locker/Changing Room
Shower Facilities
None, I wouldn't use these facilities

How often do you shut off lights in a room when not in use?



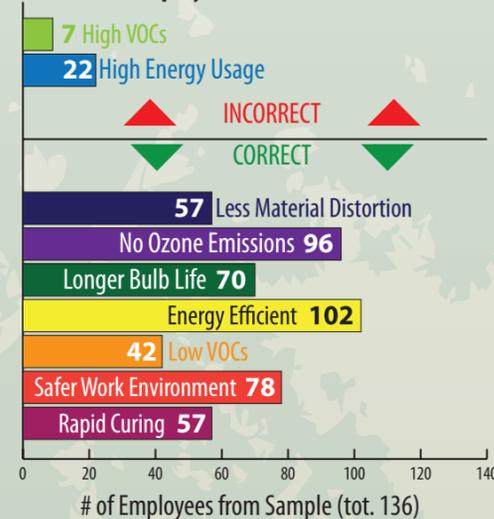
Always
Most of the time
Some of the time
Rarely
Never

Are recycling facilities easily accessible to you or near your department?

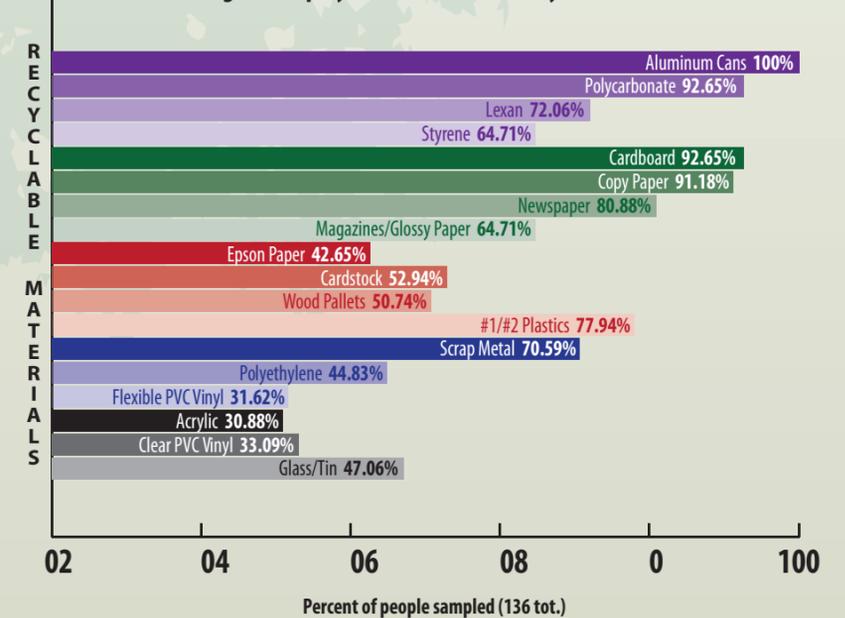


Yes
No

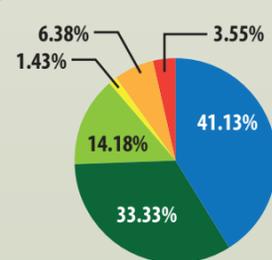
What employees know about UV LED



Percentage of employees who know we recycle these materials.

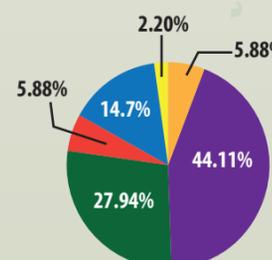


Does your department incorporate recycling into their 5S program?



Always
Most of the time
Some of the time
Rarely
Never our department doesn't have 5S
Unsure-What is 5S

Do you find your workplace thermally comfortable?



Always
Most of the time
Some of the time
Rarely
Too Hot
Too Cold





What Can the La Crosse County HHM Accept? ~ Information courtesy of La Crosse County HHM

What materials can you bring? The La Crosse County Household Hazardous Materials (HHM) program accepts material that if not properly disposed of may pose a threat to human health and the environment.

ACCEPTABLE:

- Leftover paints, stains, etc...
- Aerosol cans
- Fluorescent light bulbs, ballasts and compact fluorescent lamps
- Rechargeable batteries
- Lawn and garden chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, insecticides)
- Sharps (needles and lancets)
- Pool and spa chemicals
- Automotive products—antifreeze, fluids, motor oil, oil filters, gaso line, polish and wax
- Electronics (E-waste)

UNACCEPTABLE: We do our best to accept as much household hazardous waste as possible, however there are some things that we **CANNOT** accept.

- Explosives or ammunition
- Radioactive wastes
- Certain unwanted medications that are listed as controlled substances

DISPOSABLE/NORMAL TRASH:

- Empty aerosol cans
- Empty paint containers
- Dried latex paint

- Small appliances such as toasters, mixers, coffee pots, etc...
- Most cosmetics
- Non-rechargeable alkaline batteries

ELECTRONIC WASTE (e-waste): The La Crosse County Hazardous Materials program has a recycling program for your unwanted electronic items. Electronics must be recycled and it is illegal to dispose of them in the landfill.

Did you know that many electronics contain heavy metals like lead, mercury, and several rare metals that can be easily recycled?

FEES: Households and K-12 Schools are FREE for e-waste, EXCEPT for TVs \$10 for 21" and larger, \$5 for less than 21". Freon containing appliances have a \$20 fee. Businesses - 20¢/lb. for TV and non-TV e-waste. .

TV's and other e-waste that have been disassembled and salvaged for recyclables are charged at a rate of 25¢/lb. Regardless if from a household or business.

Salvaging electronic waste, especially TV's, can be dangerous and is potentially a violation of WDNR regulations. Because of the increased cost of disposal and employee risk, the HHM Program charges 25¢/lb. for any electronic waste that has been salvaged.

No exceptions!

ACCEPTABLE e-waste:

- TV's (\$)
- Freon containing appliances (\$)
- Printers
- Fax machines
- Copiers
- Computer Monitors
- CPU
- Laptops
- Keyboards and mice
- Disk drives & circuit boards
- Computer accessories
- Telephones
- Cameras
- VCR/DVD players
- Cable and satellite equipment
- Stereos
- MP3 players and iPods
- Computer gaming items
- Microwaves

In order to best serve our customers, please schedule an appointment if you have a load that is larger than 250 pounds. Call 608-785-9999 with questions or to schedule an appointment, OR if you have additional questions about hazardous material disposal or the best way to transport a material to the landfill.

Large Appliance and E-Waste Alternatives? ~ Information courtesy of www.bestbuy.com

Best Buy offers the most comprehensive appliance and electronics recycling programs in the United States, and consumers recycle more appliances and electronics with Best Buy than any other retailer. The company collects more than 400 pounds of product for recycling every minute our stores are open — no matter what retailer the products were purchased from.

Best Buy will remove an appliance for a fee (\$) or a TV free of charge from a customer's home when a new product is purchased and delivered by Best Buy. They can also remove a product from a customer's home for a fee (\$), even if no product was purchased. Best Buy ensures that these items are properly and safely recycled. In addition to appliance and TV recycling, Best Buy offers a FREE

recycling program for used electronics. Anything from a broken computer monitor to an outmoded video game controller can be dropped off at a local store.

Best Buy accepts most electronics and large appliances, with a few exceptions. They generally accept 3 items per household per day. Please go to www.BestBuy.com/recycle to view program details for your area.

Veteran's Day Spotlight ~ T.E.A.M. Committee

We all appreciate our freedom, for which you have our military to thank. At Empire we set out to personally thank our veterans for that freedom with our 'This Bud's for You' event. All of our veterans were given a yellow rose in a unique man-vase as a small token for their sacrifice. We also asked our fellow employees to share brief comments about their service. These are some of the comments from those who shared...

Steve Stenberg (Screen Making), Army Reserve Most memorable moment—Lack of privacy that only a fellow soldier can understand.

Jeff Meyer (Machine Shop), Army National Guard Most memorable moment— Standing on the skids of a Cobra helicopter hovering above an airstrip.

Troy Siverhus (Screen Making), Navy Most memorable moment—being in Malta on the Mediterranean Sea

Jim Weber (Stock Cutting), Army Why did you enlist? Family tradition, increase my maturity level, test myself and the La Crosse County Courts thought it would be a good idea.

Chris McMahon (Shipping), Army Reserve, actively serving. Most memorable moment—went to El Salvador to build schools for kids.

Steve G. Johnson (QA), Army Reserve What military training helps you with your job? The use of documented work

instruction to complete job duties as specified.

Justin Peterson (Machine Shop), Army Reserve Most memorable moment—Landing in the states on my birthday after a 1 year deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Jim Schweinfus (Vice President), National Guard What military training helps you with your job? Non Commissioned Officer leadership training and my experience working on the

Stockbridge Indian Reservation

Curt Blair (Shipping), Army What military training helps you with your job? Learning determination, finding ways to overcome adversity and how important unity is to an organization.

Don Olson (Maintenance), Army & National Guard Why did you enlist? I felt I had to, also I wanted to travel overseas. I had the opportunity to be stationed in Germany.

Mark Klinski (Maintenance), Army Most memorable moment— loading up in a C5A headed for Iran to release our hostages.

Troy Stockers (Art), U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, actively serving. Most memo-

orable moment—awarded high honors for being part of the clean up crew concerning the tugboat that went over the Dresbach dam.

Robert Kranski (Stock Cutting), Marine Corps Why did you enlist? I wanted to serve my country. Iraq was a hotspot then, I felt I needed to do my part.

Ron Vian (Machine Shop), Navy Most memorable moment—I was on the maiden voyage of the J.F.K. Aircraft Carrier.

Nick Patchen (Customer Service), Wisconsin Air National Guard, actively serving. What military training helps you with your job? I have learned how to lead and motivate people as well as the values of servant leadership, excellence, and communication. Aim high. Fly. Fight. Win.

Steve Lechnir (Ink), Navy Most memorable moment— Winter 1977 seeing the USS Lexington in dry dock, and how huge that aircraft carrier looked when totally out of the water!

Michael Parker (LVS), Marine Corps What military training helps you with your job? Learning how to work with others to accomplish goals.

Scott Senstad (Screen Making), U.S. Air Force Most memorable moment—Coming home after being wounded during my second tour of duty in Vietnam to my wife, that hug was great!



This Bud's for You!



20 Years in National Guard



Putting a smile on Rob's face



Prepping for sunrise meeting



One Navy guy to another John Freismuth & Troy Siverhus



Steve Lechnir recognized for his service



Fellow military, Curt Blair & Chris Mc Mahon



Honoring our veterans at the morning sunrise meeting



Randy & Marilyn thanking Scott Senstad for his service

Odd and Original, International New Year Traditions ~ Maria Selezneva



We love holiday traditions...



Russia—Father Frost & his granddaughter, Snow Girl



Bulgarian Survachka



Swedish New Year's tradition, a giant scapegoat

Still spirits of love and joy are strongly sensed in the air. We have just celebrated Christmas and New Year's, most awaited and lavish holidays of the year. And even though decorations are down and the tree is put away, atmosphere remains electrified with happiness and positivity.

Traditions and customs of the country naturally are taken by natives as given. Many follow them not knowing their roots or existing alternatives in other countries around the world. It all changes when one starts traveling. All of a sudden, simple at first sight subject appears complicated. The known way, before considered as the one and only, turns out to be just one of the many-many different ways. I believe, those things are extremely fascinating to learn about and sometimes - speaking from personal experience - are very hard to accept.

For example, Christmas in America seems to have collected all the honors for being the main winter holiday, leaving little for New Year's. Unlike in many countries it is not recognized as the biggest holiday of the year and, sadly, sometimes even not celebrated. Consequently it doesn't have many traditions of its own, except may be the Ball Drop, that is annually held at Times Square in New York City, NY. To be fair though, other states, here and there, feel the need to drop something on New Year's Eve as well. For example Plymouth, WI, does the Cheese Drop, and Droppin' of the Carp ones a year occurs in Prairie du Chien. The Balloon Drop, however, is found to be the most



London NYE—Big Ben



Paris NYE—the Eiffel Tower

famous substitution. Other than that, what could go for a local tradition: dinner out and bar promenade? - not a very original way to spend evening, as far as I'm concerned.

Meanwhile, there is a number of countries whose New Year's customs and traditions could easily be called original or even odd.

I've got to start with Russia, of course. For Russians New Year's is an opening for nearly 11 days of winter holidays. Christmas (Jan 7th), "Old" New Year (Jan 14th), Jesus Baptism (Jan 19th)- oh, you know, occasion is all we need! So, people celebrate not remembering themselves from happiness and amounts of liquor. Luck-

ily, drinking goes perfectly in sync with any other Russian tradition. Presents are brought by Father Frost and his granddaughter, Snow girl, on New Year's night. Rich dinner is served at midnight. After dinner people often go out to continue celebrating on the streets in a company of best friends or complete strangers, which on that night is pretty much the same thing.

Many Europeans celebrate New Year's outdoors. In big cities and capitals people crowd popular venues and famous landmarks. It just happened so, conveniently for the occasion, some of those places are clock towers. Thanks to that, citizens of London and Moscow traditionally welcome the New Year with the 12th chime of Big Ben and Spasskaya Clock Tower. Traditionwise it also means counting to 12, verses American 10-second countdown.

The Eiffel Tower gathers Parisians, and who cares it has

no clock, after all, punctuality has never been the best French merit.

However, practice shows again, that for some of us, who grew up "with the clock", a mere idea of celebrating New Year even a minute off will always be one of those "hard-to-accept" things.

The Leaning Tower of Pisa, pretty odd on its own, is far beaten by one Italian New Year tradition. It is to get rid of old things - to make room for new things to come. Makes sense, but the eccentric way of conducting it, perhaps, is worthy of the most temperamental nation. They throw it out of the window. So, good advice: if you happened to celebrate New Year's Eve in Italy - stay away from the windows. Oh, and just in case, keep that advice for any day in Russia too.

Bulgarians, in one of their New Year traditions, may appear original, if not kinky. After midnight young Bulgarians travel out to homes of friends and relatives, where they give each other friendly lashes with "Survachkas". Made of dogwood branches, red thread, garlic, dry fruit and coins, it all sounds pretty wicked, but supposed to bring luck, health and wealth in the next year. Gathering at the dinner table starts with 3 minutes of darkness - so called "minutes of new year kisses". Their secrecy shall stay in the dark.

Even prim and proper English don't disdain kissing with strangers on New Year. Under the well-known and all-allowing mistletoe, of course.

Swedish on New Year's night burn "scapegoats". Literally, a giant Goat statue made of straw. For good luck.

German Santa's prototype, Weihnachtsmann, naturally is called something unpronounceable. French "Santa", Pere Noel, leaves presents in kids' shoes.



Moscow NYE—the Spasskaya Clock Tower

Odd & Original... (Cont. from pg. 6)
Cuba greets New Year by filling up all the dishes and buckets in the house with water and splashing it out on the streets at midnight, seeing off the old year as easy as water.

In Myanmar people splash each other. New Year time is the hottest time of the year though, so that's ok.

Grand and colorful is traditional celebration of New Year in China. Dragon Parade brings together wide-array and otherwise estranged layers of society and unites families around big street fires.

As you can see, New Year is a very bright and happy holiday, full of original and odd traditions with deep cultural and historical roots. Those traditions may vary, but there is something that unites countries all over the World in a spiritual level: seeing New Year's as a doorstep into a new chapter of life. A chance to leave all mistakes and misfortunes in the ending year and start anew, become better, rich new heights.

So, in a very spiritual way, Happy New Year everybody!



Top 10 Soft Drinks

~ Article courtesy www.caffeineinformer.com

The epic battle between Coke and Pepsi continues, but so far Coke still has the top spot.

Both Coke and Pepsi fans are a loyal bunch so it will be hard to sway either of them to the other side. We love our sodas in these United States of America. It should come as no surprise that Coke is the most consumed product. The battle for #2 has been hotly contested though.

One of the interesting facts about soda consumption is that it has gone down each of the last 10 years. The main reason is that there are more consumer options like flavored waters, energy drinks, and the like.

Top 10 sodas in the U.S.

1. Coke
2. Pepsi
3. Diet Coke
4. Mountain Dew
5. Dr. Pepper
6. Sprite
7. Diet Pepsi
8. Fanta
9. Diet Mountain Dew
10. Coke Zero



Pop Culture Top Five Myths About Soda

~ Article courtesy aol.com

But what's the real deal when it comes to soft drinks? Do they actually cause obesity? Is diet soda healthier than regular soda?

Take a look below at five of the most common health myths about soda and what the truth really is behind them.

1) Clear soda is better for you than dark soda - FALSE

In reality, one of the only differences between clear and dark soft drinks is that the clear ones don't usually contain caffeine, but the sugar intake is just as great.

2) Diet soda is healthier than regular soda - FALSE

Just because something claims it's "diet," doesn't mean that it's any better for you. Artificial sweeteners trick your body into gearing up your digestive system for calories, which leads to weight issues in the end.

3) Real sugar is healthier than soda made with high fructose corn syrup - FALSE

Both sweeteners break down virtually the exact same way in the body -- in other words, there's virtually no difference between these sugars.

4) A trip to the gym warrants a sports drink - FALSE

In reality, our electrolytes aren't fully consumed until more than an hour of training, so a 30-minute session in the gym probably isn't going to require much more than water.

5) If you want a big boost of energy, choose an energy drink over coffee - FALSE

Many soft drinks actually contain less caffeine than a cup of coffee, but more sugar, meaning you actually won't be as energized but instead, can increase your chances of weight gain.

What's Cooking?

Homemade Taco Seasoning

Recipe courtesy of Rachel Ray at RachelCooks.com

It is 10,000 times better than the seasoning that comes in a packet labeled "taco seasoning." And if you're watching your sodium intake, this is the only way to go.

Ingredients:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1 tablespoon chili powder | ¼ tsp. garlic powder |
| ¼ tsp. onion powder | ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes |
| ¼ tsp. dried oregano | ½ tsp. paprika |
| 1 and ½ tsp. ground cumin | ½ to 1 tsp. sea salt (more or less to taste) |
| 1 tsp. black pepper | |

Directions: In small bowl, mix all ingredients and store in airtight container. (Or you can mix it together in the container you are going to store it in—just give it a shake!) Add 2 to 3 tablespoons of this mixture plus 1/2 to 3/4 cup of water to one pound of cooked meat (of your choice). Simmer over medium heat, stirring frequently until there is very little liquid left in the pan. You can triple this recipe and always have taco seasoning on hand to use for dips, spice rub and of course



Sustainability

Spotlight

Mpower Survey ~ Amanda Henthorne

As most of you know, The Green Team conducted a survey about sustainability. I, personally, had the pleasure to participate on this side of the surveys. I am happy to report that almost half of our Empire employees participated. I was at 3 locations throughout the day of the survey. It was very nice to see people eager and excited to take part in the survey, whether it was to win a T-shirt, to really voice their opinions, or let's not forget those rockin' stickers!

I had some feedback right away

with suggestions. I heard a lot of talk about community gardens at Empire and how people would come in early to tend to them. It was nice to see the competition between who knew what was recyclable and what was not. I also heard people discussing how they were happy that Empire was looking for their opinions and insight on sustainability issues as well. Looking at the results, I am happy to see that a lot of Empire's Employees are on board



Keith Cook promotes taking the survey to Marcia McFarlane

with recycling and helping with the sustainability of our planet. Because at the end of the day, if we don't take care of the planet, who is going to?

Employee Anniversaries

Employee Announcements

Feb. 23, 2016 is Soup-er Hero Day, an Employee sponsored event & charity fundraiser



Save the Date! Empire's National Sales Meeting is July 19-20, 2016



Our sincere condolences to Cindy Brush & family on the passing of her brother Mark Kane, who passed away on Jan. 19, 2016



Empire's internet storefront **MrStickerPrintshop.com** is scheduled to launch early **February 2016**

Please submit any announcements to Amy Bettis x2371



QUALITY POLICY

Empire Screen Printing has an ongoing commitment to fully satisfy our customer. Through continual improvement in all aspects of our business, we supply the best product and service in the screen printing industry, in the most efficient and professional manner possible.

JANUARY

- Dawn Adamson 32 yrs.
- Steve Nelson 29 yrs.
- Randy Hoff 27 yrs.
- Fred Baures 23 yrs.
- Tina Karaffa 20 yrs.
- Chris Mikunda 18 yrs.
- Jen Schloesser 16 yrs.
- Mai Khang 9 yrs.
- Vanessa Fox* 9 yrs.
- Eric Wienkes 8 yrs.
- Diane Fitzpatrick 6 yrs.
- Nicholas Wolfe 6 yrs.
- Allison Pedrin 5 yrs.
- Sylvester Kendrick ... 5 yrs.
- Richard Burg 2 yrs.
- Jessica Hendrickson ... 1 yr.

FEBRUARY

- Colleen Matthews... 42 yrs.

- John Freismuth 24 yrs.
- Shane Hulbert 22 yrs.
- Guy Gregerson 20 yrs.
- Jason Harnisch 15 yrs.
- Doug Billings 13 yrs.
- Jordan Coleman 13 yrs.
- Angie Severson 12 yrs.
- Ron Vian 10 yrs.
- Scott Gates 9 yrs.
- Burt Kendrick 9 yrs.
- Michael Parker 9 yrs.
- Stacie Boisen 9 yrs.
- Leanna Klotz 8 yrs.
- Dan Poff 7 yrs.
- Shelly Kendhammer... 6 yrs.
- Josh Parr 4 yrs.
- Teresa Mills 2 yrs.
- Andrea Mehner 1 yr.
- Tou Lee Thao 1 yr.

MARCH

- Jim Schwinefus 45 yrs.
- Clark Martin 27 yrs.
- Jeff Gierok 23 yrs.
- Sherrie Vinson 23 yrs.
- Jessica Kamrowski... 20 yrs.
- Petra Vogel 19 yrs.
- Lu Ebersold 15 yrs.
- Andy Kiedrowski ... 10 yrs.
- Cindy Brush 6 yrs.
- Amber Williams 4 yrs.
- Alexis Marsh 2 yrs.
- Susie Warren 1 yr.
- Walter Staff 1 yr.
- Chad Hoesley 1 yr.
- Greg Gallaher 1 yr.
- Raymond Wurzel 1 yr.

*Part-time employees

Welcome New Employees

- Todd Lejeune Donny Vue Dalton Johnson
- Andrew Hinton Alex Remen

- | | |
|--|--|
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DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER: March 31, 2016

All articles and announcements can be submitted to: Amy Bettis (2371)

