

Boise honors environmental efforts

Mayor says awards show workplace efforts can pay off

By **Melissa McGrath**
The Idaho Statesman

Four local organizations have found ways to make their workplaces more environmentally friendly, and the city of Boise took notice on Wednesday.

Mayor David Bieter presented the four — Dixon Container, New Life Office, HDR Inc. and the state Department of Environmental Quality — with the city of Boise's annual EnviroGuard Pollution Prevention Award this year during a news conference at Dixon Container.

"Being conscious of the environment is not only common sense, it also makes good dollars and cents," Bieter said. "It's just good business."

The city started the award program eight years ago to recognize businesses that are working to better the environment. The award recipients this year proved that recycling and pollution prevention programs in the workplace can pay off, Bieter said.

See Awards on page 2

At IdahoStatesman.com

Link to learn more about the city's EnviroGuard Pollution Prevention Award and how your business can apply; read about other environmentally friendly businesses in the Environment at Work columns.



Dixon Container plant supervisor Mike Casey bags up 14 cubic feet of anti-static packing material made from waste scraps. The company received an EnviroGuard Award from the city.

Awards

From page 1

Dixon Container won the award for product innovation this year after it fixed up an older machine to turn waste foam materials into a profitable shipping product.

Dixon Container manufactures shipping boxes for about 2,000 industrial and electronics companies, mostly making computer boxes.

The company also cuts up foam into squares designed to cushion computers when they are shipped in the boxes.

But when that foam is cut, some excess pieces are left behind. Owner Doug Dixon used to take these pieces to the landfill but soon realized he could cut up the excess pieces and make foam fill, which can be used like packing peanuts.

Now, the company sells about 300 bags of foam fill every month.

"We really are kind of a thrifty, innovative company," Dixon said. But for Dixon, the innovations are just a part of doing business.

"When you're small and you start with no money, you have to out-think it," said Dixon.

He and his wife, Michelle, started the company in their garage more than 20 years ago, picking up and reselling boxes and other shipping materials that other businesses didn't want.

The company now occupies a 43,000-square-foot facility near Columbia Village and employs 50 workers.

"It's a big deal for us," he said of the award. "We're really proud of it."

Not only does Dixon Container recycle waste, but most of the company's machines are used ones that Dixon and his employees have refurbished.

The other award recipients were also proud to get the award, saying it is an incentive to continue environmentally friendly practices.

The director of the state Department of Environmental Quality, for example, said he was pleased to receive what Bieter called the "walk-the-talk award" because it shows DEQ workers practice the policies they teach, including recycling programs in

HDR Inc.

HDR Inc., an architecture and engineering firm in Boise, won the medium business EnviroGuard award for its pollution prevention efforts in the workplace.

► The company encourages employees to use video conferencing to talk with clients to minimize driving time. HDR also chose its office location on ParkCenter Boulevard because it is close to the Greenbelt and within walking distance of local restaurants.

► HDR employs a director for its Sustainable Business Initiative. The director works to put recycling bins at every work station, implement a fluorescent lamp recycling program and create other environmental practices.

► The firm has a full-time Sustainable Design Services Department that works to construct and design "green" buildings, like the Banner Bank Building downtown.

For more information, contact David Gibney at 387-7026.

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

DEQ won the EnviroGuard award in the large business category because the state agency has created a variety of environmentally friendly practices in its office.

► Employees recycled 22,209 pounds of materials last year, including paper, newspapers, magazines, cardboard, aluminum cans and printer and toner cartridges.

► The agency tries to buy office products that are mostly made from recycled materials,

including business cards, letterhead, envelopes and printer paper. The benches outside DEQ's office are also made from recycled plastic.

► DEQ has an employee transportation coordinator who mapped out where employees live and organized carpooling networks. Agency employees prevented more than 75 tons of air pollution through carpooling, according to the city.

For more information about DEQ, go to www.deq.state.id.us.

the office and carpooling networks among employees.

"It's outstanding for us to receive this award," said Toni Hardesty, director of DEQ. "Our employees really do walk the talk, so it's really nice for the employees to be recognized."

Companies must apply to receive the award each year.

When the EnviroGuard program first began, the city only received two or three applications, but nine companies entered this year, said Megan Kershner, a program coordinator at the city's Department of Public Works.

► The other five applicants received honorable mentions this year.

To offer story ideas or comments, contact reporter Melissa McGrath at mmcgrath@idaho-statesman.com or 377-6439.

New Life Office

New Life Office won the EnviroGuard award in the small business category. The company refurbishes used furniture, such as chairs, desks and cubical walls, and then sells the pieces at about half the price of new furniture. New Life Office has been open in Boise for three years.

The store has saved 1,500 tons of recyclable materials from heading to the landfill so far this year, said Kelly Way, the Boise store manager. New Life Office delivers and installs the furniture and can design office spaces, Way said.

For more information, contact New Life Office at 321-9211.