

FACT SHEET
Denver Health
Paramedic Division Green Initiative

May 2008

The Denver Health Paramedic Division has a long-standing reputation for providing high quality advanced life support emergency services to the citizens of Denver. In 2007, it added a focus of environmental conscientiousness to its mission of exemplary pre-hospital care.

Determined to serve the planet as well as its patients, the Denver Health Paramedic Division's Green Initiative focuses on four specific areas for improvement: fuel consumption, water consumption, paper consumption and waste distribution.

Fuel consumption – the Denver Health Paramedic Division converted its entire fleet from using petroleum-based diesel fuel to B20 biodiesel. Biodiesel creates less carbon pollution than conventional diesel thereby reducing pollutants in the air and helping those with chronic breathing problems. Denver Health's ambulance fleet consumes 140,000 gallons of fuel per year.

While biodiesel can be more costly than regular fuel, paramedics found other ways to save money and offset the added expense. In addition, the secondary benefits of better air and in turn better public health is priceless.

Water consumption – A baseline analysis found that the Denver Health Paramedic Division was using 4,464 gallons of water and 55 gallons of detergent every week to wash ambulances. Ambulances were being washed after every shift, regardless of external condition.

A program was developed to only wash the outside of the vehicles on alternate days based on vehicle number — odd number ambulances are washed on certain days, even number ambulances on the other.

Through this program the Paramedic Division had reduced water consumption by 30 percent.

The inside of each ambulance is cleaned between patient transports, and sterilized and restocked after every shift.

Chemical use reduction – While evaluating its ambulance washing practices the Paramedic Division also found that it could significantly reduce its use of chemicals in this process. By diluting the detergent used to wash the vehicles, the Division went from using a 55-gallon drum per week to wash ambulances to using one drum per month.

The result is less chemicals discharged into the municipal wastewater system, and an annual savings of \$11,760.

Recycling efforts – The Denver Health Paramedic Division has reconfigured all of its printers and copy machines to only allow for two-sided printing. The Division has gone from using about 764 sheets of paper each day to an average of 278 sheets per day – a savings of a about a ream of paper every day.

Reuse trays have also been added to all printers and copy machines to ensure maximum utilization of all paper products, and trashcans have been replaced with recycling bins around the copiers and printers. In addition, the Division purchases only post-consumer recycled paper.

Aluminum and plastic recycling bins have been placed throughout the Paramedic Division's headquarters and garage, and the numerous cardboard boxes used to deliver medical supplies to the Division are also being recycled.

The Denver Health Paramedic Division has managed to reduce the environmental impact of its operation while still maintaining a commitment to providing high quality care for all.