

HEAVY DUTY Trucking

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10/30/2009 FCCC Delivers Last Load of Waste to the Landfill

By Diana Britton, Managing Editor

Freightliner Custom Chassis Corporation recently sent its last load of waste to the landfill, according to Bob Harbin, president. The company, which has been working its way down to disposing of zero solid waste for the last two years, celebrated reaching this goal Thursday, three months ahead of schedule.

Roger Nielsen, chief operating officer of DTNA, presents Bill Harris (right) with a "Tag Team Champion" award.

In a teleconference with reporters, Harbin and Bill Harris, environmental health and safety supervisor at the company, announced the milestone after finding a way to dispose of the last 3 percent of its waste, which will go to a cogeneration facility to make cement.

In September 2007, Daimler Trucks North America, FCCC's parent company, chose the manufacturer as the pilot site for the Zero Waste to Landfill program, with the goal of becoming 100 percent landfill waste-free by 2010. The company has gone from producing 3 million pounds of waste per year to producing none. According to Harris, FCCC's program will now be implemented across the board at DTNA.

When FCCC first learned of the program, the company decided to get the state involved. It partnered with several governmental and state organizations, including the EPA's WasteWise Program; the South Carolina Environmental Excellence Program, which is sponsored by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control; the South Carolina Smart Business Recycling Program; and the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department.

"These valuable partnerships have helped us to achieve these outstanding results," said Harris.

Also key to the program's success was the formation of a "Green Team," which was made of exempt and non-exempt employees that met monthly. According to Harbin, this grassroots effort really made a difference, rather than having a guy at the top making all the decisions.

The team visited a zero-waste Subaru plant in Indiana in 2008 to see a waste reduction program firsthand, and helped implement current recycling programs at the FCCC facility. The team also encouraged suppliers and vendors to use returnable and recyclable packaging, and worked to identify inefficiencies in the facility such as air leaks and overages in electricity and water usage.

The Green Team also designed a portal on the company's Intranet site, to provide employees with information about simplifying recycling efforts and updates on the program's progress.

"It's the team's tenaciousness and foresight that enabled our company as a whole to work toward a healthier environment and a cleaner community," he added. "We knew being selected as the pilot facility for DTNA was going to set the bar for other DTNA brands. We accepted the challenge, and achieved the desired results in an even shorter timeframe than we imagined."

The company also started by taking a photo of a pile of its waste in the landfill, and found that they weren't doing a good job of recycling some of the items they use to recycle, such as small pieces of wood.

Harris said the largest reduction in waste occurred during the first six months of the program after finding all the items that were easy to recycle. After that, it took longer to tackle those few items that were harder to recycle. The effort involved simple things such as switching from using Styrofoam cups and installing hand dryers in the restrooms. According to Harris, these things were difficult for people at first, and left them with culture shock.

"I'm greatly impressed by our Green Team, our other employees and the culture change that has taken place at FCCC," Harbin said.