

OHA EnviroNews

Environmental and Occupational Safety Issues

December 2009

John Chapman Award Nominations

Nominations are open until Jan. 11 for OHA's 2010 [Health Care Leadership awards](#), including the John Chapman Award. This award recognizes a hospital or health system that has shown excellence in initiating or supporting hospital pollution prevention programs such as reduction of waste-stream volume or elimination of mercury from the hospital. The award is named after John Chapman, popularly called "Johnny Appleseed," who planted thousands of apple trees across the Midwest during the 19th century. Submit a nomination via this [online survey](#).

Eligibility: Nominees must be OHA member organizations. The award is accepted by the chief executive officer of the recipient hospital. Previous John Chapman award recipients range from large hospitals such as Christ Hospital in Cincinnati to small hospitals such as Barnesville Hospital, a critical access hospital.

Mini P2 University, Roundtable Scheduled

A Special Roundtable and Mini P2 University has been scheduled for Jan 19 at Fisher Titus Medical Center. Mini P2 University is an accelerated program, offering a hands-on approach to evaluating hospital waste systems (solid, universal, recyclable, infectious, confidential, hazardous, etc.). It is an excellent opportunity for member hospitals to take home information that could enhance an existing waste management program or information to help in getting a program, green team or green initiatives started at their hospitals.

The Roundtable will be held from 9-11 a.m., and is open to all member hospitals free of charge. The P2 University will immediately follow the Roundtable and is available for a nominal \$50 fee to cover expenses including lunch. The roundtable will discuss Fisher Titus Medical Center's pharmaceutical reverse distribution program as well as each participating hospital's reverse distribution program. There will be a speaker from Barnes Nursery to discuss food composting for hospitals and how it can help hospitals implement a composting program. In addition, Fisher Titus will share about its partnership with Barnes nursery for composting, and why it is featured in the Gordon Food Services first quarter news letter.

Mini P2 University is open to the first six hospitals to register. It will begin promptly at noon and will continue through 5 p.m. or later depending upon the question and answer period. To register for one or both programs, contact Susan Zabo at susanz@ohanet.org or 614.738.2186.

Analysis Sees Increased Pollution in Ohio

Ohio ranks fourth in the nation for carbon dioxide emissions and has seen a 10 percent increase in the "global warming" pollutants since 1990.

Environment Ohio's review of pollution emission trends, which is based on fossil fuel consumption data from the U.S. Department of Energy, found that nearly half of the state's emissions resulted from the generation of electricity.

Other findings in the report:

- Ohio has the second highest emissions from coal-fired electricity generation of any state, behind only Texas.

- Nationally, emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil fuel consumption increased by 19 percent from 1990-2007.
- Unlike Ohio, more than a third of states cut pollution from 2004 to 2007.

Among other initiatives, the report recommends that federal government “build on the initial progress made by some states by passing strong clean energy legislation and adopting common sense EPA rules to cut pollution from aging coal plans and big smokestack industries.”

Chemical Regulation Reform Could be Coming

You might believe that the products you purchase have been tested for impacts on human health...and, chances are, you would be wrong. The air fresheners, glass cleaners, dry wall, vinyl flooring, spot removers or non-stick cookwear found in most homes have not been tested for long-term effects on human health, whether newborn, child, adult or elder.

The Toxic Substances Control Act or TSCA (pronounced toss-ka) of 1976 was intended to regulate the chemicals used to produce many of our consumer goods, but was hampered at its inception with burdensome requirements. As is the practice when implementing new legislation, existing chemicals already in the marketplace were “grandfathered in,” allowing about 20,000 potentially toxic substances to continue to be sold without any guarantees of safety. In addition, the law requires the EPA to prove that a chemical, let’s say the bisphenol-A (BPA) in your water bottle, presents an *unreasonable risk* in order to require safety data from the manufacturer. This situation puts the burden of proof on the regulatory agency instead of the producer who stands to profit from the sale of the product. Backwards? Yes, it is. To then regulate or restrict the use of a chemical, the EPA must find that:

- The chemical presents or will present an unreasonable risk,
- The benefits of regulation outweigh the costs of regulation, and that
- The regulations represent the least burdensome way to eliminate unreasonable risk.

The real outcome of this law is that the EPA has tested only about 200 chemicals in the previous 33 years; it has restricted the use or production of only seven groups of chemicals. Given that there are approximately 80,000 chemicals on the market, that’s not a lot of control.

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson has identified reform of TSCA as one of her [top priorities](#). (To that end, Congressional hearings were held on the reform of TSA in February of this year. Similarly, the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the CDC’s National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) have initiated [A National Conversation on Public Health and Chemical Exposures](#) to occur over 18 month period. Several nationally-recognized environmental nurse advocates and members of the [Alliance of Nurse for Healthy Environments](#)) have been selected to participate in the various work groups of this project. Their first meeting occurred in November 2009. The run-up to action at the federal level has included numerous position statements and advocacy actions from a variety of groups, including the following:

- 2006 ANA Resolution: Nursing practice, Chemical Exposure, and Right-To-Know
- American Public Health Association: Calling on Congress to Restructure the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976
- National Caucus of Environmental Legislators: Federal Chemical Policy
- Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families: A Platform for Reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act.

ONA urges nurses to remain involved in advocacy efforts through their professional groups, legislators, and community associations.

It would be reassuring to know that the presents given this holiday season can be enjoyed and will not be the cause of illness in the future. *Source: Kathleen Morris, Nurse Practice Specialist, ONA member,*

Stericycle Acquires MedServe

The acquisition of MedServe Inc. by Stericycle has been cleared of anti-trust concerns. The acquisition should take place during the fourth quarter of 2009. Stericycle reached an agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice and the states of Missouri and Nebraska to purchase competitor MedServe. The deal allows Stericycle to divest certain assets that it will acquire from MedServe. The purchase price was reduced from \$185 million to \$182.5 million, subject to further reduction for MedServe's indebtedness as of the closing and other expenses related to the transaction. The closest [MedServe facility](#) to Ohio is in SW Michigan.

FDA Alerts Providers to Sterilizer System Safety Concerns

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is urging health care facilities that use the STERIS System 1 Processor (to sterilize endoscopes, bronchoscopes and other medical devices) to replace the system as soon as possible. While the FDA believes there have been some malfunctions of the system, the apparent primary reason for the FDA action is that the STERIS system has been modified since it was last approved by the FDA as a medical device in the late 1980s. The agency said it is not satisfied that the manufacturer has been working effectively to address the problem. Immediate discontinuation of the use of System 1 is not required by the FDA, but providers should begin seeking alternatives.

For more information, see the [FDA notice](#) to health care facilities and an extensive [question and answer document](#). ECRI Institute also provides several free documents to assist hospitals in selecting alternatives to STERIS. Sign up to receive these documents on the [ECRI Institute Web site](#). Hospitals that have questions also can contact STERIS at 1.800.548.4873.

Holiday Tid-Bit

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's day, Americans throw away a million extra tons of garbage each week, including holiday wrapping and packaging. If every family reused just two feet of holiday ribbon, the 38,000 miles of ribbon saved could tie a bow around the entire planet. (*Use Less Stuff: Environmental Solutions for Who We Really Are*)

Happy Holiday

Happy Holidays and wishes for a Happy Green New Year from the OHA Environmental Leadership Council, chaired by Mel Creeley, East Liverpool City Hospital and OHA's Rick Sites and Susan Zabo

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