

EXTRACTIONS



a newsletter from **O'CONNOR ASSOCIATES**

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GREEN CONSUMERS STILL WORTH WOOING

Seven years after Loblaw's (operator of the Real Canadian Superstores) introduced its President's Choice GREEN line of 100 environmentally friendly products, you have to search hard to find any survivors. Is the 'green consumer' movement dead? David Ryzebol, Superstore's public affairs director, attributes the marketing failure to two main causes. Although the environment was an important issue to 98% of the population in 1989, in tough economic times customers just wouldn't pay the small extra costs for 'green' products. The public was confused, too, because environmental groups and the federal government were unable to agree on the environmental impact of individual products.

Nonetheless, the impact of President's Choice GREEN remains large. Retailers still woo environmentally conscious shoppers with such approaches as "Now, 30% less packaging," or Safeway's Options labelling of less harmful products, or rebates for reusing old grocery bags. This indicates there must be enough environmentally conscious shoppers still around to be worth wooing.

[from *Environment Views*, Fall 1996, p. 10]

PULP MILL SLUDGE AS FERTILIZER

Last spring, some bedding plants sold in Calgary and Edmonton were raised in a potting mix containing composted pulp mill sludge. Because the sludge-based fertilizer and soil conditioner releases its nutrients slowly, plants grown in the new mix are more vigorous and require less care than those grown in traditional potting mixes. For the trials, the Alberta Newsprint Company, in a joint venture with the Alberta Research Council, sent wastewater sludge from its Whitecourt mill to the Composting Centre of Excellence run by Olds College. The company is now reviewing the economics of building its own composting facility at the Whitecourt mill and marketing the composted sludge.

[from *Enviroline*, Vol. 7, No. 16, p. 7]

ISO 14000 ALREADY IN COURT

Two Environmental Management Systems Standards (ISO 14001 and ISO 14004) were published in September 1996, and their influence has already reached the courts. In Alberta, a company convicted of causing air pollution in violation of its operating licence was fined \$100,000 and ordered to achieve ISO 14000 certification within three years or forfeit a \$40,000 performance bond.

The purpose of all ISO standards is to facilitate international trade, and, although purely voluntary, an ISO 14000 certification may become a 'green' procurement requirement, especially for international monetary institutions.

ISO 14000 is similar to ISO 9000 in that both require organizations to generate a standard series of documents and to commit to continuous improvement. An ISO 14001 Environmental Management System requires a company to formally document its environmental goals, the process for reaching those goals, and how progress will be monitored. This International Standard is applicable to any organization that wishes to demonstrate a commitment to environmental responsibility.

For more information, contact the Standards Council of Canada in Ottawa, (613) 238-3222.

[from *Enviroline*, No. 21, September 1996, p. 161]

[<<http://www.scc.ca/iso14000/thestnds.html>>]

ENVIRONMENTAL SUCCESS STORIES?

Do you know a person, group, or business in Alberta that has set an example for environmental achievement or someone who has gone 'over and above' what is expected of them in protecting the environment? If so, the Alberta Emerald Foundation wants to hear from you. The Foundation is now accepting nominations for the 1997 Emerald Awards. Nominations close February 28. The Emerald Awards will be presented at a gala award ceremony Monday, June 9 at the Jack Singer Concert Hall in Calgary.

To obtain a nomination form, contact the Foundation at 1-800-219-8329 or e-mail ross@supernet.ab.ca.

DYNAMOTIVE IN SPOTLIGHT

DynaMotive Technologies Corporation of Vancouver won the Technology Gold Award in the 1996 Financial Post Awards for Business. Among DynaMotive's technologies and products that are helping to solve major worldwide environmental problems are motion control actuators, a biomass refinery, and acid-free metal cleaning systems.

For cleaning wire and steel, the DynaMotive process uses electrolysis and ultrasound instead of acid to peel away scale, remove lubricants, and create a metal surface that is dry, surgically clean, pH neutral, and rust-resistant. This eliminates the risks and costs of handling acids and caustics traditionally used in the wire and steel industry and minimizes the likelihood of having to re-clean the metal if left in storage. The current process continuously cleans 200 metres of wire per minute and in one production test reduced cleaning costs from \$19 per ton to \$2.50 per ton.

[from *The Economist*, April 27, 1996 and DynaMotive press releases <<http://www.dynamotive.com/dmcc/>>]

RHUBARB TO THE RESCUE

Now that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are banned in most countries, scientists are inventing dozens of ways to turn CFCs into less harmful chemicals. One technique destroys CFCs with ultraviolet light, while another uses an electron-rich solution which, when exposed to the chlorine atoms released by CFCs, produces salts such as sodium chloride. A third promising technique uses a chemical found in rhubarb leaves. Yale University researchers, Robert H. Crabtree and Juan Burdeniuc, pass vaporized CFCs through sodium oxalate at 550°F. When the vapor cools, the remaining chemicals are salt, sodium fluoride, and carbon. The process apparently destroys CFCs selectively, even in the presence of other compounds.

[from *Popular Science*, December 1996, Vol. 249, No. 6, p. 16]

CONTAMINATED SITES REGULATIONS FOR B.C.

In 1993 the province passed new legislation on contaminated sites. After more than three years of extensive planning and consultation with a wide variety of sectors, including local government, business and environmental groups, the provincial government has approved the most comprehensive regulations in Canada.

"These progressive regulations will provide a framework to efficiently deal with the assessment and cleanup of contaminated sites, and will protect the interests of property owners who innocently purchased property polluted by

previous owners," said Environment, Lands and Parks Minister Paul Ramsey.

Anticipated benefits of the new regulations when they come into effect in April include less expensive alternatives to law courts for settling cleanup disputes, better protection from liability for municipalities, and a simple system for accessing available information on specific sites across the province.

[BC Environment press release, December 18, 1996
<<http://www.env.bc.ca/>>]

EPA'S 'VOLUNTARY' DATA

The Toxic Substances Control Act requires manufacturers to disclose to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) internal corporate studies on any potentially toxic chemicals they produce. When it appeared that many studies were being withheld, the EPA tried a lighter approach. During a five-year 'amnesty', which ended in October 1996, the agency hoped that chemical manufacturers would turn over previously withheld data if they were promised reduced penalties. In what has become the agency's largest 'voluntary' enforcement program, the EPA collected more than 10,000 unpublished scientific studies that show that many chemicals now on the market may pose significant risks to people or to the environment. The EPA must now review all these studies to see if more chemicals should be strictly regulated.

[from *National Law Journal* (11/04/96) Vol. 19, No. 10, p. A10 by way of <<http://www.gnet.org/gnet/news/summary/>>]

RECYCLED WATER OK FOR DYEING

Dyeing carpets uses large volumes of water (20 pounds of water for each pound of carpet), and Tuftex Industries of Santa Fe Springs, California, the largest carpet manufacturer on the West Coast, uses 1 million gallons of water per day. When Tuftex began to consider using recycled water to cut costs in its dyeing process, there were many more questions than answers. After several years in a cooperative venture with California's Central Basin Municipal Water District and the City of Santa Fe Springs, most of those questions have been answered. A stable recycled water supply has helped reduce re-dye rates well below industry averages and has created two levels of savings by using less expensive water to begin with and by spending less on chemicals for chelation and pH control.

But most importantly, for the last two years, Tuftex has not been able to attribute any customer complaint or material failure to the use of recycled water.

[from *Environmental Solutions*, September 1996, p. 20]

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