

St. Mary's General Hospital Kitchener, ON

St. Mary's General Hospital is an acute care facility with just under 900 employees and 168 beds. St. Mary's is only the second hospital in North America to formally develop and register their Environmental Management System to the ISO 14001 Standard in September, 2001.

Description of Project

In 2000, the Board of Trustees approved St. Mary's General Hospital's first Environmental Policy. The Environmental Policy declares St. Mary's commitment to the environment through the prevention of pollution, ensuring continual improvement in the hospital's environmental performance, setting environmental objectives and targets, and complying with applicable environmental legislation.

Through setting yearly environmental objectives and targets, St. Mary's General Hospital has decreased biomedical waste by 25% and increased hospital recycling systems by 33%. The hospital has also implemented a hospital-wide emergency chemical spill response program, developed a chemical-free landscape plan and addressed all identified environmental non-compliance issues.

In addition to these accomplishments, St. Mary's has also joined forces with local hospitals to solicit regional recycling services, planned and carried out fun environmentally related competitions amongst other hospitals, and pledged to a "Mercury Free Medicine Campaign".

Benefits

Environmental:

One of the first objectives set for the year 2000 was to reduce the amount of biomedical waste being generated at St. Mary's General Hospital by 50% by the end of the year. So far, St. Mary's Hospital has reduced the amount of biomedical waste by 25% from 1999. It should be noted that the 25% decrease in biomedical waste weights is primarily a result of properly segregating garbage out of the biomedical waste stream. The increase in day surgeries has attributed to St. Mary's not reaching its 50% reduction goal.

As a result of new recycling programs, recycling containers, signage, and educational efforts, St. Mary's has increased recycling by 33% from the 1999. This program met and exceeded the environmental target set at 30% for 1999-2000. In the future, St. Mary's will continue to evaluate new recycling alternatives and where possible, implement new recycling programs.

Reducing and eliminating chemical use in current landscaping practices is also a priority for St. Mary's. Fortunately, with the amount of rain Waterloo Region received in the summer of

2000, the target of zero pesticide/herbicide application was attainable. Natural pest and weed control methods such as aerating, re-seeded and fertilizing were used to achieve a thick, lush lawn. Vegetation that was prone to attacks from insect predators was promptly identified and removed. Landscape plans were also developed for various areas around the hospital, utilizing drought resistant, native plants, ground covers, and salt tolerant plants. Due to the on-going development of construction, plans for changes in landscape will be implemented over the next 5 years. Unpredictable weather conditions, construction, and evolving insect predators are obstacles that will need to be overcome in order to obtain a chemical-free landscape in the future.

Through Health Care Without Harm's "Mercury Free Medicine Campaign", St. Mary's has committed to the immediate reduction and eventual elimination of mercury. St. Mary's has already significantly reduced mercury use by purchasing electronic and colour-indicator blood pressure devices and properly disposing of the mercury-containing blood pressure cuffs. Unused and broken blood pressure cuffs, mercury pods, thermometers and other mercury containing devices were also removed and properly disposed of. The Purchasing department has also joined efforts to ensure mercury is not brought into the hospital.

Economic:

Some key financial benefits of planning and implementing an environmental management system at St. Mary's have been:

Improved waste separation and segregation by staff has resulted in a decrease in biomedical waste. This decrease accounts for a \$4,700 reduction in biomedical disposal costs for 1999 and a reduction of \$9,000 from 1998.

Reduced environmental liability from addressing all identified environmental non-compliance issues.

Social:

St. Mary's environmental management efforts have improved the hospital's community relations within Waterloo Region and provincially and have resulted in more environmentally conscious staff.

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