



Silicon Labs

Solid Waste Services started the WasteSMART program to recognize local businesses that reduce and recycle waste and buy recycled products...

Silicon Labs has the distinction of being the first Austin business to be so recognized as a WasteSMART partner. The company formed a team of employees to scrutinize their company's waste stream and recommend ways of reducing and recycling as much of the material as possible.

History and Action

Headquartered in Austin, Silicon Labs is a global company that designs and develops circuits for use in a variety of electronic products that we use every day. Silicon Labs wanted to meet the ISO (International Standardization for Organization) 14001 standards in order to do business in the global economy. This group of standards outlines businesses practices for minimizing harmful effects on the environment.

The company formed the "Green Team," a cross-functional team of employees to research and implement ways to reduce, re-use and recycle in the workplace. One of the Team's main goals was to reduce the number of disposable plastic water bottles in the company's waste stream. Green Team members worked for more than a year on developing their waste reduction and recycling program. One of their recommendations (installing filtered water stations in break rooms and providing employees with reusable polycarbonate bottles), resulted in an estimated 300,000 plastic water bottles to be diverted from

the landfill in just one year's time.

Above and Beyond

Through its Green Team, Silicon Labs has set up stations throughout its facilities to recycle:

- all paper products
- aluminum cans
- plastic bottles
- fluorescent bulbs
- product scrap (sent to a company that extracts all the metal)

Silicon Labs also maintains tight control of the very limited hazardous materials it uses, which includes:

- batteries
- lead-based solid waste
- flammables
- corrosives and oils

Making recycling convenient and accessible is important, so blue bins are provided at each desk, printer and copy center for paper products. Employees track the volume of paper recycled. Every break room and conference room has recycling stations for aluminum cans and plastic bottles.

Fostering Involvement

Knowing that their continued success meant getting more employees involved, the Green Team

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also worked to educate and train 800 employees, contractors and temporary employees, including those in other U.S. locations and several other countries. They mounted posters in break rooms outlining Silicon Labs' environmental policy and recycling efforts. The Team covered the same information in an educational presentation developed and emailed to employees, who were then asked to view it and take a short quiz about what they had learned. Program results and other relevant information are also communicated via the intranet. The Green Team's ongoing commitment means employees will be continually educated about their role in keeping environmental responsibility as an integral part of Silicon Labs' business model.