

insidetrash

King County Solid Waste Division Employee Newsletter

summer2013

Inside Trash — Where Yesterday's Trash is Today's News

Letter from the Director

It's hard to believe that I am approaching my one-year anniversary with the Solid Waste Division. I know such a milestone is hardly significant in light of the impressive tenure that many of you have. However, even in my short time here, it has become clear to me that we have some very important work ahead of us.

The division has earned a reputation for achieving great things – from building environmentally friendly transfer stations to earning Harvard University awards. During this same time, the business environment has changed significantly – including economic downturn, reduction in tonnage, and some customers evaluating their disposal options after 2028. The fact is that we cannot rely on our past successes to secure our future. Instead, we are challenged to reinvent our business model to ensure we are well-positioned to achieve our environmental and service goals in an ever-changing environment.

Business as usual equates to eventual obsolescence. Cassette tapes and even CDs were once state of the art but have quickly become novelties. Value is defined by the customer, not us. So, as we work together leveraging our diverse knowledge, we must listen carefully to our customers to understand how we can deliver services that solve their problems, enrich their environments, and add value to their communities. In the months and years ahead we will begin exploring services and technologies that increase synergy with our valued customers.

We must never forget that it is our privilege to serve 37 cities and the unincorporated areas across King County. Serving communities, protecting the environment, and operating with excellence; such privileges will remain ours so long as we prove to be the best. Your continued commitment and hard work will ensure our success.



Recognition

Managers took the opportunity at the Leadership Team meeting in April to publicly recognize a few division employees who have gone the extra mile to get the *right results*. It would take the whole day to name everyone in the division who does good work, but on this day, we took a few minutes to thank some great employees for everything they do. Photos of the recipients are on the following page.



Program Manager **Patti Southard** organized a major green building conference.



Administrative Specialist **Laila McClinton** updated the "big green" transfer station brochure.



Confidential Secretary **Roxanne Malatesta** uses her 20 years of experience at King County to keep Pat sane.



Utility Workers **DJ Saarinen, Steve Espinoza, Dean Stecklenburg,** and **Dave Schroeder** have a 5-year perfect safety record.



When a hose in the compactor at Enumclaw broke, **Greg Loukidus** and **Tom Pierce** took quick action to prevent a 400-gallon hydraulic oil spill.

School Assembly Program Has Lasting Results

As part of the division's Schools Education Program, acting duo Terence and Angela Kelley have given 100 performances every fall at schools throughout King County for about 15 years. The plays deliver educational messages about recycling and waste prevention while entertaining kids. Recently they shared this story with Program Manager **Donna Miscolta**:

I also wanted to share something really cool our son Aleron told us about. He was chatting with a new friend he made at Seattle Central Community College. This young man told him that he had goals of becoming a park ranger. He said when he was a little boy this assembly program with two crazy actors came to his school, and that it totally changed his life and inspired him. He has been interested in being a steward of the environment ever since. So Aleron said, "That might have been my parents! Were the actors a tall black guy and a white lady?" Sure enough it was us!

It made me feel really good to know that we impacted this young man in a positive way!



Actors Terence and Angela deliver the division's recycling message to kids.

SWD Gone Wild

Last year, two employees at Cedar Hills helped a young deer that was caught in a fence. But not all wildlife encounters are so heartwarming. Last fall, bear scat was found at the closed Duvall and Cedar Falls Landfills, and claw marks appeared on the trees at Duvall. Bears have been spotted at Cedar Hills, too. The estimated black bear population in Washington is between 25,000 and 30,000 animals. The North Cascades population of grizzly bears is estimated to be 20 animals.

It is always a good idea to work in pairs and stay alert in areas that potentially harbor bears. According to Western Wildlife Outreach, a nonprofit that provides science-based education about bears and cougars, predatory attacks by bears are extremely rare. However, a bear may become aggressive if it feels threatened. Here is what Western Wildlife Outreach says about surprise bear encounters:

- If you surprise a bear at close range, remain calm. STOP. Do not run and don't crowd the bear – leave it a clear escape route and it will probably exit.
- Speak in a low monotone voice so the bear can identify you as human.
- A bear may charge in an attempt to intimidate you – usually stopping well short of contact. If a bear begins to charge, use bear spray if you have it.
- If you don't have bear spray, drop to the ground and play dead. Lie on your stomach, clasp your hands behind your neck, and use your elbows and toes to avoid being rolled over. If the bear does roll you over, keep rolling until you land back on your stomach.
- Remain still and quiet. A defensive bear will stop attacking once it feels the threat has been removed.
- Do not move until you are absolutely sure the bear has left the area.



A poplar at Duvall used as a scratching post.



We hope BJ Bogart was using a zoom lens when he took this close-up of a bear behind the north flare station at Cedar Hills!

Work Group Focus: Payroll

We all have to answer to a supervisor. But one work group in the division holds itself accountable to everyone – that group is Payroll. Interim Payroll Supervisor **Sheilla Guerrero** says, “At the end of the day, it affects employees’ lives so we have to make it work.”

What Sheilla found when she joined the division in April was a recently reinvented group. Due to illness and various hiring issues, the division has not had a permanent Payroll Supervisor in two years. (Now retired, Diane Voiland temporarily took the helm during the PeopleSoft transition.) One of two Payroll Specialists, **Tracey Scott** had only been on the job since May 2012.

Tracey had worked with PeopleSoft in the private sector for years before coming to the division, but King County’s set up was still challenging. She says, “The PeopleSoft system can do miracles. In the private sector they have almost limitless financial resources to customize it to their uniform workforce, but the County’s budgetary limitations and variety of needs put constraints on that customization.” For example, payroll within the Solid Waste Division alone is governed by a dozen different contracts and memoranda.

Sheilla and Tracey both agree veteran Payroll Specialist **Rhonda McQueen**’s experience has been invaluable in helping them get up to speed. Almost 20 years ago, Rhonda started with a temporary position in the Cedar Hills front office, and she has been doing our payroll for 17 years. Back then, payroll entered every employee’s hours directly into a mainframe.

Nowadays, the team begins checking electronic timesheets on Monday, looking for anything that could result in an inaccurate paycheck. They have to resolve irregularities by noon on Wednesday, the hard deadline from Central Payroll in the King County

Finance and Operations Department. If an employee's approved record misses the deadline, that employee doesn't get paid until the next pay period. For these three, failure is not an option.

They work as *team to get the right results*. Tracey and Rhonda say communication is the best tool for avoiding errors. They appreciate employees and supervisors who call them with a heads up if there is an issue. They routinely email supervisors when something looks wrong, and will even track down an employee in person to explain a timesheet.

Once the Wednesday deadline is met, they can deal with other things, like participating in the Payroll Task Force to resolve PeopleSoft issues. Tracey says the transition to PeopleSoft has been the greatest challenge in her time with payroll, especially using it to pay under FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act), something the old system couldn't do at all.

To the women of payroll, all of the challenges are worth it because they *love their customers*. All three of them agree that the people in the Solid Waste Division are the best thing about their job. Tracey says, "I have been made to feel welcome since day one by this eclectic group of people."

Rhonda agrees, "You not only get to know them from work, but also personally. At Cedar Hills, they'd come in to the office for candy and over time we'd get to know them. You find out the guy who seems really gruff is actually donating all of his leave. After moving to King Street Center two years ago, I still miss those people, but I'm forming relationships here, too. I couldn't say one place is better than the other, even though they're really different."



Sheilla Guerrero was recognized at the Leadership Team meeting for the way she jumped right in to a challenging position.



Sheilla Guerrero, Rhonda McQueen, and Tracey Scott get you paid.

Who You Gonna Call?

Got a question about your timesheet? Call your Payroll Specialist.

Rhonda's Groups 296-0447 – M-F 6-3PM

- Department Director's Office
- Transfer Stations
- Shop
- Utility Worker
- Utility Worker Assistants
- Equipment Operators
- Administrative Staff at Cedar Hills
- Cedar Hills Management
- Stores
- Landfill Gas/Wastewater

Tracey's Groups 296-0488 – M-F 7:15-3:45pm

- Division Director's Office
- Human Resources
- Engineering
- Recycling and Environmental Services
- Planning and Communications
- Finance

- Utility Worker/Tipper
- Transportation
- Customer Transactions
- Post Closure Landfill Maintenance

2013 Women in Trades

Once again, the Solid Waste Division was well-represented at the annual Women in Trades Fair. Truck Driver **Launa Running** contributed this photo essay.



Recicla más. ¡Es facilísimo!

In June, Program Manager **Gerty Coville** was on the cover of the newspaper, *el Siete Días*. The front page story was about a workshop to build partnerships between the Solid Waste Division and local Hispanic/Latino media. The newspaper lauded the division for its dedication to developing programs that “provide access and education to the Latino community.”



Cover girl Gerty Coville

The workshop briefed media outlets on the principles of the Recicla más program, and presented a request for partnership proposals worth \$15,000. All eight organizations in attendance submitted proposals, ranging from TV public service announcements to participation in community events like Fiestas Patrias. The division is evaluating the proposals now, with the goal of establishing a long-term partnership to engage the Spanish-speaking audience in a variety of ways.

In 2010, the Metropolitan King County Council passed Ordinance 16948, codifying the Executive’s Equity and Social Justice Initiative. Under this Ordinance, all King County programs and services are required to apply King County’s “Fair & Just Principle” (defined in the Strategic Plan).

Although the ordinance lays out approaches to implement the *Fair and Just Principle*, most agencies in King County are just beginning to figure out how those approaches apply to them. The

Solid Waste Division jumped ahead of the curve with its “Recicla más. Es Facilísimo” campaign.

The county requires all important materials to be translated into Spanish and other languages commonly spoken in King County. Recycling and Environmental Services staff exceeded that requirement by developing a Spanish-language education and outreach program to parallel its English-language “Recycle More. It’s Easy to Do.” program. Recicla más works closely with members of the county’s Hispanic/Latino community to develop materials and messages that work best for this community.

Recognizing that Spanish-speaking residents prefer to get information from peers in their community rather than from a government website, Gerty began working with a group of 12 Spanish speaking women called *Facilitadoras*, to teach recycling. These community activist volunteers have been trained to talk to community members about garbage and recycling. They talk to their church groups, to women’s groups, and at club meetings, but their education efforts are not limited to formal presentations. In the first month that the *Facilitadoras* were active, they shared information in 430 person-to-person contacts.

Because it is the most commonly spoken language besides English in King County, the division is focusing on Spanish – for now. But lessons learned will eventually be applied to programs in the county’s other significant minority languages. In time, recycling messages will be able to reach all communities in King County.



Facilitadoras teach their peers about recycling and household hazardous waste.

Fair and Just –
We serve all residents of King County by promoting fairness and opportunity and eliminating inequities.

Lisa's Lean Desk

As part of her training as a King County Lean Facilitator, Project Manager **Lisa Huntley** read a book called *Lean: A Factory of One*. It made her reconsider her infamously cluttered desk. Lisa knew how to find everything on her desk and thought that “out of sight was out of mind.” But the book countered that way of thinking.

“You can’t teach something if you don’t do it yourself,” Lisa says. So using a Lean concept called “S5,” she created a simple organization system (active projects in the desk drawer, old things or things she might need later on a bookshelf). “Folders and labels and alphabetizing – I would never do that. This is something I can stick with,” says Lisa. Now Lisa clears her desk daily instead of letting things pile up, and she keeps a notebook instead of writing on stray scraps of paper.

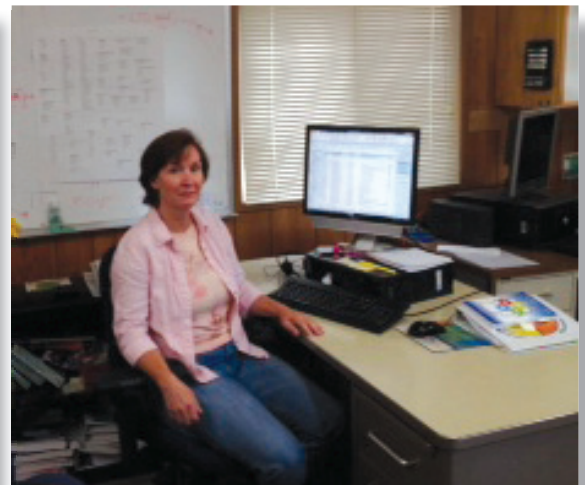
Not only does her desk look better now, she has work space. “Before, I literally didn’t have room to move the mouse. Now the only thing I see on my desk is what I’m working on, and it’s so much easier to focus. I’m actually less stressed at work because my focus is not distracted by things on my desk.”

S5

- Sort
- Straighten
- Shine
- Standardize
- Sustain



LisasDeskBefore...



and LisasDeskAfter

CAMP Flagpole

It took a lot of effort and more than a little patience, but the persistent effort of TSO **Wade Kennedy**, with the teamwork and resolve of Engineers **Francis Gaspay** and **Rich Hillard**, finally resulted in the installation of a flagpole at the Shoreline Recycling and Transfer Station.

For the past several years these three worked together to get the flagpole on the Capital Asset Maintenance Program (CAMP) project list for 2013. Because it was really important to everyone working at Shoreline, they moved the project timeline up to ensure that it would be completed in time for the 4th of July. This project ran into many obstacles, such as drawing power to the pole location. But these three worked collaboratively to overcome them all and even came in under budget.

Employee effort led to installation of a flag pole at Shoreline RTS.



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Shoreline Responds to Needs of First Responders

When the Shoreline Fire Department asked the division if they could perform some training on the Shoreline Recycling and Transfer Station grounds, management gave TSOs the final say in the decision. The training was going to impede normal trailer movement for a full day, but the TSOs overwhelmingly supported the choice to help out the fire department. Division management (and everyone in Shoreline who relies on well-trained firefighters) offers sincere thanks to the Shoreline TSOs.



Fire Department training at Shoreline RTS

This material will be provided in alternate formats upon request.



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We'd Like to Hear From You

If you have any story ideas for the next issue, please contact Gemma Alexander at 206-296-8498.

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