

Earth Day 2012: Greening Government

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Caryn Womack] Hi, I'm Caryn Womack and I'm here with Liz York, CDC's Chief Sustainability Officer. Welcome, Liz.

[Liz York] Thanks, Caryn.

[Caryn Womack] Liz, tell us a little about Earth Day.

[Liz York] Caryn, Earth Day began in 1970. Twenty million people united in a grassroots effort to highlight concerns about the environment. Now, more than a billion people participate in Earth Day celebrations each year, making it the single largest civic observance in the world.

[Caryn Womack] Why does CDC celebrate Earth Day?

[Liz York] Well, we celebrate Earth Day in support of CDC's mission to protect the public's health. Protecting the environment is part of protecting health, and CDC wants to ensure that our actions, as an agency, promote a healthy environment. We'd like to minimize the negative impact our operations have on land, air, and water.

[Caryn Womack] Let's talk about operations. How is CDC's current environmental performance?

[Liz York] Since 2009, CDC has been tracking our greenhouse gas emissions, and in the last year, we have achieved an 11 percent reduction in these emissions. We're turning out lights, adjusting our thermostat settings, and shutting down equipment that's not in use, and those are just a few of the things that we're doing to reduce emissions. We still have many other savings strategies to implement, but our actions and successes so far have put CDC on target to significantly reduce our energy use by 30 percent by 2015. We're proud of these achievements; they reduce our environmental impact, and as a bonus they're saving us money.

[Caryn Womack] What are CDC's plans for Earth Day this year?

[Liz York] CDC is holding local walks at each of our 17 nationwide campuses. We call them 'Earth Walks,' and they're a one mile loop around each CDC campus. It's a great opportunity for people to get outdoors, connect with each other, and stay active. In the past, CDC has held other events in connection with the walk festivities, such as tree planting and recycling drives. This year, in Atlanta, we're partnering with a local organization to collect shoes. Shoes in good condition will be reused by those in need and shoes not suitable for reuse will be recycled, and that keeps them out of the landfill.

[Caryn Womack] So CDC is using Earth Day to get active, reduce waste, and connect with the needs of local communities. That's great!

[Liz York] Actually, we're excited this year to connect with an even larger community as we launch a new CDC website featuring tips on living a sustainable lifestyle and creating a sustainable workplace, as well as information on CDC's environmental performance.

You can learn how recycling, green purchasing, people-focused worksites, and facilities that have a minimum impact on our environment all contribute to sustainability. The site also has information on how *you* can do your part, like choosing fresh, locally-grown foods and making environmentally friendly transportation choices. These actions improve the quality of the environment and protect our health and wellbeing. By making sustainable choices, we can make *every day* Earth Day!

[Caryn Womack] That sounds great! How can our listeners get to that website?

[Liz York] They can go to www.cdc.gov/sustainability.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.