

# Environmental Stewardship



Many of the solutions that are good for people's health are also good for the planet.

At Kaiser Permanente, we recognize that healthy communities and a healthy environment are critical to the health and wellness of every person. Creating these has always been central to our mission. We are dedicated to environmental stewardship, and we aspire to provide health care services in a manner that protects and enhances the environment and the health of communities now and for future generations.

Kaiser Permanente has been committed to the environment since our founding in the early 1940s. Our Environmental Stewardship program is part of our Community Benefit work and is anchored in promoting the health of our communities. Healthier communities with healthier people are more resilient to disease. By eliminating or mitigating environmental contributors to disease, we help people lead healthier lives.

To encourage healthy environments, we lead or support innovative efforts throughout our organization to decrease waste and pollutants, conserve water and energy, promote sustainable agriculture and food procurement, and take steps to reduce our carbon footprint.

## Finding Safe Alternatives to Harmful Chemicals

Exposure to toxic chemicals in everyday life has increasingly become a health concern. Unfortunately, many products used within the health care industry contain harmful chemicals—products such as cleaners, solvents, disinfectants, plastics, and building materials such as flooring and paint. At Kaiser Permanente, we're committed to researching and sourcing safer alternatives to reduce harmful exposure to our patients, staff, and communities.

Our Sustainability Scorecard was developed in 2010 as a way to rate our suppliers on how eco-friendly and non-toxic their products are. It encourages our suppliers to increase their offerings of environmentally responsible products and enables Kaiser Permanente to better choose products that are safer for our patients, staff and communities. Most of our environmentally preferable product choices—such as intravenous bags manufactured without PVC and DEHP—are either cost neutral or cost less than the more toxic products.

## Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions contribute to climate change and the rise of pollution and disease. As a health care provider, we understand that it's our responsibility to try to limit our greenhouse gas emissions, even as we increase our health care services. By reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, we are working to mitigate climate change and create healthier communities.

Kaiser Permanente has been at the forefront of embracing clean energy solutions, developing standards for sustainable building in health care and looking for ways to cut back our energy consumption. Our on-site solar and fuel cell installations helped us to avoid more than 17,700 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions in 2013. These initiatives are part of a larger plan to expand the use of sustainable energy sources throughout our system and reduce the total greenhouse gas emissions of Kaiser Permanente's operations by 30 percent by the year 2020 (compared to 2008).



**We continue to invest in and promote environmentally sustainable solutions that are not only good for the planet, but that actually reduce operating costs. These savings help Kaiser Permanente to achieve its mission of providing high quality, affordable health care.**

### **Promoting Sustainable Farming and Food Choices**

Locally grown, sustainably farmed food choices are good for the environment and for people's health. Kaiser Permanente currently devotes approximately 18 percent of its food spending to sustainable choices such as certified organic or Fair Trade products, with a goal to increase this amount to 20 percent by the end of 2015. We also sponsor more than 50 farmers markets at our facilities, providing members and surrounding communities with easy access to healthy, locally grown food. By partnering with local growers, we support the development of local and sustainable food systems as a public health tool.

### **Conserving Water**

Kaiser Permanente is supporting water conservation through the implementation of rainwater harvesting, dual-flush toilets, grey water re-use, and drought-resistant landscaping at our facilities. Many of our medical facilities use digital X-ray processing that enhances image analysis while also cutting down on large amounts of water and chemicals needed for traditional film processing.

### **Reducing, Re-using, Recycling to Eliminate Waste**

Waste reduction significantly reduces the pollution associated with the extraction, transport and processing of the earth's natural resources. By safely reprocessing, selling or recycling our used medical equipment, we divert several hundred thousand pounds of waste from landfills each year. Our electronic medical record system, now in use across all of our medical facilities, has dramatically decreased the use of preprinted paper forms. Kaiser Permanente has committed to re-use, recycle or compost at least 40% of our waste materials systemwide by the end of 2015 (excluding construction and demolition debris, where we often achieve much higher rates of recycling on a typical project). By educating and involving our staff and physicians in campaigns to reduce the use of plastic bags, single use water bottles and office paper, we are supporting the small changes people can make in their daily lives to protect the environment—at work and at home.

### **Greening Ourselves and the Health Care Sector**

Kaiser Permanente is an industry leader in promoting sustainability in the health care sector, having won numerous awards for our achievements in making our health care practices environmentally sustainable. We share our experiences and practices with others to improve environmental performance of the entire sector, and we work to increase public awareness and promote dialogue that recognizes the importance of environmental stewardship as a component of healthy communities. Together with other hospitals and health care systems, medical professionals, community groups and non-profit environmental organizations, we are working to transform the health care sector, without compromising patient safety or care, so that it is ecologically sustainable and supportive of public health and the environment.

If you would like to learn more about our commitment to our communities and environmental stewardship, visit [kp.org/green](http://kp.org/green)