



Long Beach School District's director of transportation Robert Sambo (center), GLICCC chairman and president Ronald Gulmi and GLICCC program coordinator Rita Ebert

Long Beach School District Receives Trailblazer Award

Recognized as Leader in Clean Transportation Solutions

The Greater Long Island Clean Cities Coalition (GLICCC) chose the Long Beach City School District as one of two recipients of its annual Trailblazer Award given to the member organization (private or municipal), that has best demonstrated a continuing commitment to integrating alternatively fueled vehicles into its fleet, resulting in both emissions benefits and job creation. With 28 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) school buses in its fleet, the Long Beach School District was cited as having exceeded both criteria for this award.

GLICCC chairman and president Ronald Gulmi and GLICCC program coordinator Rita Ebert presented the award to Robert Sambo, the district's director of transportation, praising him and the district for helping students and bettering the community.

In 2004, the district purchased 20 CNG buses and retrofitted the remaining diesel buses with special converters, becoming the first district on Long Island - and one of the first in New York State - to operate an all "clean-air" fleet. In the spring of 2003 voters approved an initiative to purchase the buses, which made the district eligible for nearly \$2 million in state and federal grants to offset the cost. The district added four new CNG buses to its fleet this past summer. The addition of another four buses was scheduled for November 2009, bringing the total to 28. Mr. Sambo's goal is to eventually operate over 95% of the district's 50 buses on natural gas.

Long Beach Public Schools have taken advantage of three rounds of Clean Air & Water Bond Act funds from NYSERDA for the district's CNG school bus program. They have been awarded additional funding from GLICCC to expand their fueling station and additional Air & Water Bond Act funds from NYSERDA for eight additional buses.

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, the Clean Cities program advances the nation's economic, environmental, and energy security by supporting local decisions to reduce petroleum consumption. GLICCC is one of 90 local coalitions that develop public/private partnerships to promote alternative fuels and vehicles, fuel blends, fuel economy, hybrid vehicles and idle reduction awareness. ■

How Do We Dispose of Styrofoam?

Known within the packaging industry as expanded polystyrene (EPS) and usually bearing the "#6" recycling symbol, Styrofoam (which is actually the trademark name for Dow Chemical's product) has long been an environmental bugaboo, as it contains chemicals known to cause central nervous system damage and other health problems for workers regularly exposed to it. And since it is difficult and expensive to recycle, EPS tends to clog landfills already teeming with toxic garbage.

But EPS has proven to be one of the lightest and least costly forms of packaging material, so the industry has worked hard to make recycling it more cost-effective and convenient. More than 80 packaging manufacturers, polystyrene suppliers and equipment makers joined together in 1991 to form the Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers (AFPR). The Maryland-based industry association works to facilitate recycling between EPS manufacturers and the companies that buy from them. It currently boasts of overseeing the recycling of 10-12 percent of the post-consumer EPS packaging produced every year.

Member companies, which provide drop-off services at their facilities, reprocess up to 60 percent of the EPS foam collected and incorporate it directly into new packaging. Some of the material is reformulated and used in a wide variety of durable plastic products. Currently, more than 110 plant locations serve as collection centers which together receive upwards of 50 million pounds of post-consumer EPS packaging each year. AFPR provides a comprehensive list of EPS drop-off locations from coast-to-coast on its website. While companies sending the EPS in for recycling must bear the shipping or drop-off costs, they may save money over paying for disposal fees at the landfill.

One caveat: AFPR does not get involved in the recycling of the foam "peanuts" so often used as packaging filler. Most "pack-and-ship" shops (like UPS stores) will accept used but otherwise clean foam peanuts to reuse in their own shipments. Otherwise, the Plastic Loose Fill Council, another trade group, runs a free web-based database where users can find a local drop-off center by simply punching in their zip code.

Also, food service managers should bear in mind that recycling of soiled food-grade EPS is more difficult and expensive due to issues of bacterial contamination. Most EPS packaging recycling centers will not accept such tainted foam. Many food service companies have followed the lead of McDonald's and phased-out their use of EPS containers for disposable dishware and to-go orders.

Companies that don't find it convenient to recycle or otherwise dispose of large amounts of EPS (food-grade or otherwise) might want to consider purchasing one or more StyroMelt machines from UK-based Purex. The technology uses a thermal compaction process to reduce the volume of EPS by up to 95 percent. The resulting solid EPS "briquettes" are dense enough to make for good recycling fodder, and also take up much less room than the original foam if they do end up in the landfill. ■

First Order of Business

Edward P. Mangano was sworn in as Nassau County Executive on January 1, 2010 and signed the repeal of the sales tax on home energy use.

GREEN THOUGHTS

COMPILED BY
SALLY GILHOOLEY



The American Clean Skies Foundation web site, www.cleanskies.com, is a superb site for all interested in energy and environmental policies and practices in the US and around the world. The up-to-the-minute information it carries will educate and increase understanding of issues that affect everyone on the planet.

A new study from World Wildlife Fund and European insurer Allianz found that global temperatures will pass climate "tipping points" and alter sea levels and rainfall patterns unless "aggressive" measures are taken very soon to reduce world emissions. The northeastern US is at risk for sea rise while southwest California will become drier. www.cleanskies.com

GreenGirls.net is a network of women who care deeply about our environment. Their well-designed site connects many eco-friendly endeavors and products including clothes. Their online store, CafePress has some great items.

The Better World Club provides emergency roadside assistance, travel and insurance products and services. Dedicated to promoting a cleaner environment and alternative modes of transportation, they donate 1% of annual revenues toward environmental clean-up and unique eco-friendly travel alternatives. See betterworldclub.com ■

January Green Calendar

12-14 Tuesday - Thursday

The New Jersey Builders Association hosts inaugural Virtual Green Build Event - an online green building expo. Open to all affiliated with green building and homebuilding. \$150. www.virtualgreenbuildevent.com

12, 14, 19, 21 Tues, Thurs

Home Energy Auditor Training Course. Will teach skills necessary to provide energy auditing services to homeowners. 10 am to 4 pm each day. Free. Seating limited. Must have technical background to participate. Send resume to audit-class@ligreen.com or call 631-721-1908.

13 Wednesday

The Direction of Renewable Energy: Shaping the Future of Business on Long Island. Workshop series. Focus on Geothermal Power. 8:30 am registration, 9 am workshop. Free. 632-9837 or e-mail leslie.rurup@sunysb.edu.

24 Sunday

Coastal Research Education Society of LI Seal Walk. 8 am. Westhampton Beach. www.citizen-scampaign.org/calendar

27 Wednesday

German American Chamber of Commerce, Inc. in cooperation with McKinsey & Company present FOCUS: Copenhagen Climate Summit Results and Business Opportunities in the U.S. 5 pm. McKinsey & Company Park Ave., Plaza 55 East 52nd Street, 21st floor New York City. Renewables@gaccny.com ■