

Carbon Footprint of Downtown Seattle Buildings to drop by 50% as Seattle Steam Flips the Switch on New Renewable Fuel Boiler

SEATTLE (October 14, 2009) — [Seattle Steam](#) is fundamentally changing the way it produces energy. The 200 downtown and First Hill buildings that receive energy for heat from Seattle Steam will be far more environmentally efficient as Seattle Steam activates a new biomass-fueled boiler at its Western Avenue Steam Plant. The state-of-the-art boiler will use clean urban waste wood for its fuel source, displacing 50 percent of the natural gas burned in the past for a resulting 50% reduction of CO_{2e}*. The switch to a renewable fuel source will offer numerous benefits to Seattle Steam customers and the community at large.

“We began this years-long effort because we could see a way to make a difference in the world’s climate change dilemma,” says Stan Gent, president and CEO of Seattle Steam Company. “Reducing greenhouse gasses is the right thing to do and also offers the most viable business model for us in the long-term.”



Biomass, such as that used by Seattle Steam, is recognized by the Department of Energy as a sustainable, renewable resource. Seattle Steam’s conversion to wood waste will advance the City of Seattle’s green initiatives and its goal of complying with the Kyoto Protocol. Along with improvements to operating efficiency, new and existing buildings find that the use of renewable fuels is an important component of their efforts to “go green,” especially those seeking third-party green certification.

Urban wood is a cost-effective alternative, as the price of wood remains more stable compared to the fluctuating prices of natural gas and oil. At least \$5 million previously spent to purchase natural gas from Canada will now be spent locally for waste wood. Additionally, Seattle Steam’s use of wood waste is a zero-waste process because the ash byproduct from the wood boiler is removed and used in a variety of industrial applications. Potential applications include additives to cement manufacturing or as a protective cover sealant for landfills. Seattle Steam’s new plant is one of the cleanest burning facilities in North America.

Seattle Steam will use approximately 250 metric tons of waste wood daily, which amounts to roughly 10 to 12 truckloads delivered to the site each night. Even at this volume, Seattle Steam’s consumption represents less than four percent of the overall supply of the waste wood available to the local market. The privately-owned utility has contracts with Cedar Grove Composting and all wood recyclers to provide a long-term supply of urban waste wood.

By converting to biomass fuel, Seattle Steam is reducing its CO_{2e} output by approximately 45,000 metric tons annually, which is equivalent to the CO_{2e} emissions from the annual energy use of more than 3,700 homes.

Seattle Steam and its predecessor have supplied heat to important Seattle buildings for more than 115 years, adding new technologies and updating the process to enhance efficiency along the way. Their customers include many of the largest commercial properties, hotels, hospitals and colleges in downtown Seattle, including the Washington State Convention Center.

The utility also provides steam that controls humidity to protect priceless works of art at the Seattle Art Museum and the high-temperature steam needed to sterilize surgical tools and equipment in Seattle's three major hospitals.

** CO_{2e} stands for carbon dioxide equivalent. There are six greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon dioxide (CO₂). The other five GHG emissions are converted to CO₂ for standardized reporting purposes.*

About Seattle Steam

Founded in 1893, Seattle Steam Company is a privately-owned district heating utility that provides heat to 200 buildings in Seattle's central business district and First Hill neighborhoods. The company has two plants and five boilers in downtown Seattle with 26 employees. The thermal energy is currently produced by a mix of biomass (clean urban waste wood) and natural gas. For more on Seattle Steam, please visit www.seattlesteam.com.

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