

Step by step

This simple list helps employees identify and reduce waste

By Patrick Summers

It's known as a "waste walk." But it's no wasted walk.

With the help of a special tool with a big name—MULCHWASTER—the walks are making an environmental difference at the Airplane Systems Laboratory in Seattle, part of Boeing Test & Evaluation.

MULCHWASTER is essentially a check sheet developed by an employee environmental involvement team to identify and reduce waste and help the company shrink its environmental footprint. The process begins with a manager requesting the team to conduct a waste walk through a designated work area.

"One of the first things we do on a waste walk is look in the wastebaskets

to see if people are throwing away items that can be recycled, like cans, bottles and packing material," said Richard Reuter, test engineer in the Airplane Systems Laboratory.

Work groups have used MULCHWASTER and the waste walks to reduce the amount and cost of lighting and electricity used by Boeing. In addition, teams have used this process to

increase recycling and encourage suppliers to switch to more efficient and less wasteful packaging for parts and shipments to Boeing.

"People are thinking about different types of waste in new ways; that is one of MULCHWASTER's biggest achievements," said Lisa Adair, a Boeing Test & Evaluation manager and environmental involvement team member.

MULCHWASTER has its roots in the critical preflight checklist pioneered by the company's engineers and pilots developing the B-17 prototype in the 1930s. Reuter's team carried the concept over into their environmental involvement activity.

"It's the Boeing way of thinking; a process check sheet helps ensure consistency and guard against complacency," Reuter said.

Jim Waltosz is a MULCHWASTER

believer. The electrical calibration technician said a waste walk raised his group's awareness and made a difference.

"I might have 15 pieces of test gear powered up and running at my bench during a normal day," he said. "Instead of walking off at the end of the shift, I will turn it all off, unless I'm in the middle of a test."

Waltosz noted that more of the 22 technicians in his group now take the simple step of powering down or turning off their equipment when it's not in use.

Determining the cost savings that have resulted from MULCHWASTER is challenging, according to Adair. A lack of water metering and cyclic laboratory testing demands can make it difficult to measure the amount of electricity and water conserved, as well as the associated cost savings to the company, she said.

"Still, we know from research and

experience that turning off unused lights and office and laboratory equipment can significantly cut power use and costs," Adair explained. "We can have an even bigger impact if we can teach people to think about power consumption in the design of equipment and work areas."

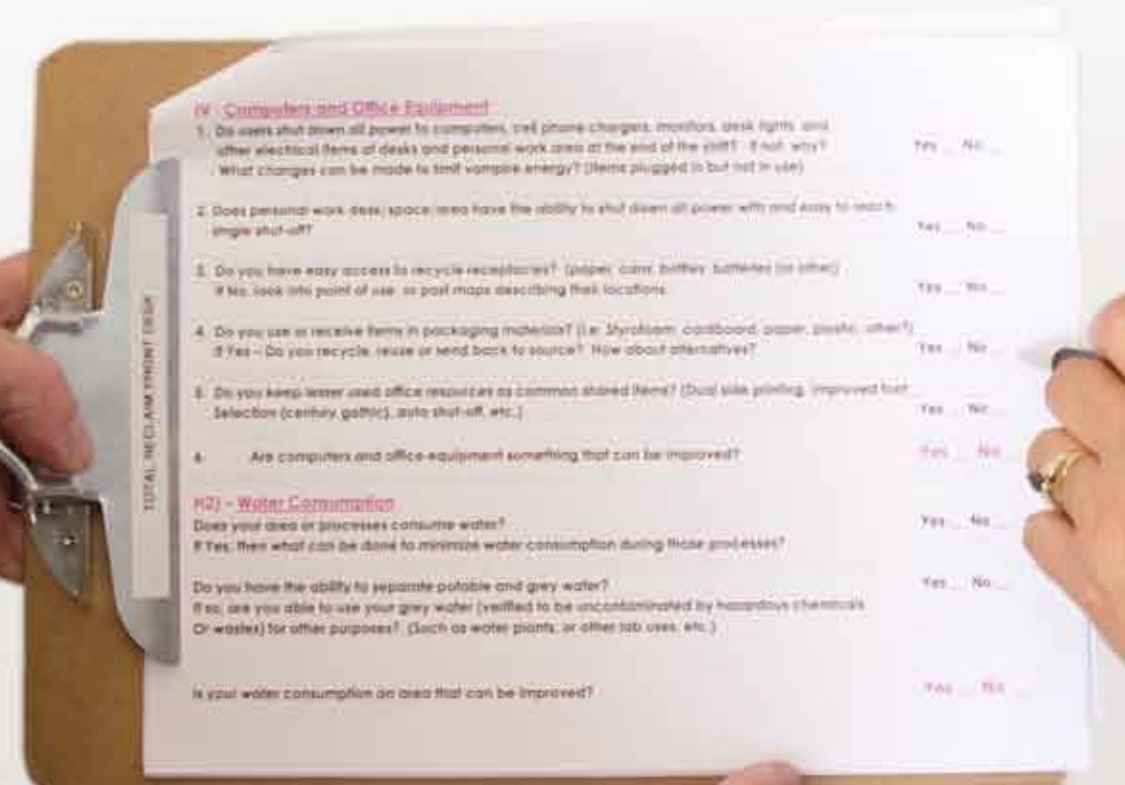
Reuter agreed. "We're changing the way people think about waste, which over time will have a big effect." ■

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PHOTOS: Technical specialist Joi Curtis uses the MULCHWASTER check sheet to help Jim Waltosz, electrical calibration technician, find ways to reduce electricity usage in his Boeing Test & Evaluation work area.

JESSICA OYANAGI/BOEING



What's in a name?

The Boeing Test & Evaluation employee involvement team members chose the MULCHWASTER name to reflect the breadth of products and processes they believe can benefit from a focus on reducing waste:

- Materials
- Utilization
- Lighting
- Computers and office equipment
- H₂O
- Waste (hazardous waste and chemicals)
- Air (compressed air and gases)
- Solid waste and packaging
- Transportation
- Electrical power/energy
- Responsibility, accountability and authority

Employees can access the MULCHWASTER check sheet at the team's website: <http://bxt40.web.boeing.com/2-122GreenTeam>