



Underwriters Laboratories, headquartered in Northbrook, Ill., is a not-for-profit product safety testing and certification organization that has customers in 99 countries and has placed its familiar UL logo on 19 billion products. It has more than a century invested in its reputation for enhancing consumer confidence in the products it evaluates.

UL saw Clean Air Counts as a natural extension of its efforts to further enhance its reputation as a socially responsible corporate citizen. “Our motto is ‘working for a safer world,’” said David Brown, UL facilities engineer. “Working for a cleaner world is an important part of that.”

“And it does save money,” Brown was quick to add.

Clean Air Counts is now a part of daily life at UL.

Workplace Transportation Options

About eight percent or 140 of UL’s Northbrook employees utilize the company van pool program. Nine UL vans run on compressed natural gas, fueled at special stations at the office complex. Because the CNG vans each qualified for \$4,000 rebates from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency’s Alternate Fuels Rebate Program, their cost was about the same as other vans. UL also offers shuttle busses to the nearest train station and it accommodates more employee telecommuting. All programs get positive feedback from employees.

Paints, Cleaning Products and Building Materials

Volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, are a key ingredient in the recipe for ozone. Major sources of VOCs are paint, cleaning products and building materials. UL switched to products in all three categories that are low in VOCs. Low VOC paint, for example, is comparable in cost but Brown says the quality is as good as other paints and the payoff tremendous: more than a half-ton reduction in VOC emissions during UL’s first year with the new paints. Low VOC adhesives for building projects, and low VOC cleaning products, cut VOC emissions by another 420 pounds.

Landscaping

Those vast green lawns typical of traditional corporate campuses -- pleasant as they may be to some -- require high emission mowing equipment, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation and watering. By switching seven acres of land to natural landscaping and hardier plants that need less maintenance, UL achieved a

reduction in emissions equal to removing 14 cars from the road. They achieved less mowing, fewer chemicals and less erosion. UL planted black eyed susans, purple cone flowers, iron weed and green headed sunflowers, with an aesthetic result most prefer to green grass.

Energy Efficient Lighting and Equipment

UL was able to lower its electricity usage by using low energy light bulbs and light fixtures. It also used computers, monitors, laser printers, scanners and fax machines that display the "Energy Star" logo. Such equipment reduces air pollution by reducing the amount of electricity needed from power plants that generate smokestack emissions.

Results

All of these strategies are paying off handsomely. VOCs were reduced by 5.7 tons per year. Nitrogen Oxide, or NOx, was reduced by 7.6 tons per year. That is equivalent to removing 183 cars from the road for an entire year.