

OREGON'S GREEN BUSINESS UPDATE

OREGON GREEN

Building a sustainable future

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Upcoming Oregon Green issues

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At the ^{green} car wash

ECO Car Wash makes for cleaner, greener cars

Sustainability and automobiles – unless they're hybrids or electric – don't often go hand in hand, especially in a carpooling, bike-riding, mass-transit-loving town like Portland.

But Joey J. Hanna and his company, ECO Car Wash, are keeping at least one aspect of the automobile – its cleanliness – in the green arena.

"Making green choices is a way of living," says Hanna, president and CEO of the company, which he started about five years ago with his brother, Mark. "We have to live that way on whatever level we can, whether it's recycling or washing our cars in an environmentally-friendly way, so the generations that come after us will be able to survive."

ECO Car Wash, which grew out of Hanna's family connections to the car wash business, currently has five automated express wash locations in the metro area. The company bills itself as an environmentally-friendly operation for a number of reasons, not the least of which is what Hanna calls an "extensive, computer-

controlled system" that tightly monitors a facility's use of water.

The automated car washes, he says, use between 25 and 40 gallons of water per wash, compared to the 80 to 140 gallons that can be used during a wash at home in the driveway. ECO also recycles 100 percent of the water it uses via a sophisticated filtration system that safely discharges any overflow into sanitary treatment facilities.

The computer-controlled equipment at ECO's car washes shuts down automatically and efficiently to reduce waste, something that helps Hanna cut costs – and stay competitive.

"Because I manage everything very tightly, I'm able to offer some of the cheapest car washes in the state," he says.

ECO also uses all biodegradable cleaners and polishes, and even its hydraulics employ water-based fluids as opposed to traditional hydraulic oils. In addition to normal recycling, gradually replacing standard lights with compact fluorescents and installing photocell light controllers in his facilities, Hanna has enrolled ECO in Portland General Electric's renewable energy program, which provides a percentage of electricity from wind and other sustainable energy sources.

A lot of the



Courtesy of ECO Car Wash



Courtesy of ECO Car Wash

measures Hanna has taken cost more, and it may be years before his business realizes a financial benefit – if it ever does. But, he says it's, worth it.

"It's definitely more expensive to be green," he says, noting that the renewable energy adds anywhere from \$600 to \$700 to his utility bill per month. "But it's good for the community, it's good for the environment and it just sets a good tone for the company."

It also helps attract a certain customer base, Hanna says, noting that ECO Car Wash washes "hundreds of thousands of vehicles" each year.

"Absolutely I have people who come to us just because we're green," he says. "People appreciate that aspect about us, and they're extremely loyal."

A University of Portland graduate, Hanna says he's looking into other ways to deepen the green

tones of ECO, which he hopes to expand down the I-5 corridor. Among the ideas he's looking into: solar panels, low-flush toilets and other ways to recycle and conserve.

He also had Gresham Waste Management come in recently and analyze the trash at an ECO location. The results will lead to various recycling bins at his facilities so that customers will have an easier go of recycling when they're cleaning out their cars.

"I think you have to make (sustainability) user-friendly for people," he says. "And not just customers, but businesses too. I think a lot of people want to be green but don't necessarily know how. If you make it easy for them, and make the information simple and available, any business can be green at some level."

— by JON BELL