Greenhouse emissions record low for 2009

Samantha King
News Editor

Each year Elon University makes a commitment to lower energy output. During the 2009 fiscal year, Elon lowered its green house emissions 1.5 percent more than it had initially planned.

The fiscal year was from June 1, 2008 to May 31, 2009 and did not include Lindner Hall, Elon's newest building. The university had originally wanted to reduce its emission by 6 percent, Elaine Durr, Elon's sustainability coordinator, said.

The category "greenhouse emissions" encompasses primarily energy, vehicle exhaust from commuting to and from campus, solid waste and waste water.

Durr said the cause for the reduced emissions "is hard to measure and can't be pinpointed exactly," but is a combination of behavior changes, such as turning off lights when leaving the room, and changes implemented by the Physical Plant.

Although exact emission numbers are difficult to track, the university uses a number of different ways to estimate emissions. In the fall of 2008, the Office of Sustainability issued an online survey, students, faculty and staff about their commuting habits, car size and other factors.

The POWERless competition, a competition between residential areas to encourage students to use less energy by turning out lights and unplugging appliances when not in use, is another way the university can measure energy consumption, Durr said.

"In terms of energy used in lighting, the Physical Plant plays a major role," Durr said.

Lights across campus were replaced. The plant replaced the old T12 floresent tubes with T8S. The T12S were larger by five-eighth inches and used significantly more energy.

Electricity usage, although not measured exactly, is measured by a number of meters placed throughout campus, eight in residence halls and one in Moseley Center, in addition to many others, Roberte Buchholz, director of the Physical Plant said.

Buchholz said the plant made many changes during the last fiscal year to cut costs and green house emissions.

Showerheads in many of the residential halls were replaced to be more energy efficient.

"We put (low flow) aerators on the faucets in the showers," Buchholz said. "The Oaks (which has a meter for monitoring) saved 250,000 gallons."

The plant is also in the process of installing more dual flush toilets to conserve even more water.

The university is also cutting back on vehicle emissions.

"Admissions uses vehicles the most for travel," Buchholz said. "(Admissions) switched to hybrid cars about four years ago."

The BioBuses use biodiesel fuel and "the custodial staff replaced the Cushmans. Now they are either battery operated or biodiesel," Buchholz said.

The university is currently purchasing more biodiesel fueled Cushmans to replace the battery powered ones because the batteries often are short-lived when the staff use them to perform heavy-duty tasks across campus.

The plant also installed "chillers," or cooling towers, in air conditioners across campus to cool them in the summer. The chiller will run water through the machines to cool the coolant in the air conditioning system.

Another measure the Physical Plant uses to conserve energy on campus is to lower the temperature to 65 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter, Buchholz said.

"We monitor the temperature on thermostats in many buildings on campus, such as Moseley," Buchholz said. "Only if there are complaints will we raise the temperature."

Toyota recalls cause concern about Elon Zipcar fleet safety

Justin Berger
Reporter

Toyota announced Monday Feb. 8 the recall of its 2010 Priuses, causing concern for Elon University's Zipcar fleet of three, two of which are Priuses.

Zipcar expanded its Elon fleet this year adding a Honda Civic and replacing two of the older Priuses with 2010 models.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced on Feb. 4, it opened a formal investigation into the "braking issue" with the 2010 Prius.

"Safety is our top priority," Ray Lahood, secretary of the National Highway Traffic Safety Admisinstration, said. "That is why in recent weeks NHTSA has also issued a consumer advisory on the recall of several models of Toyota vehicles and the Pontiac Vibe involving pedal entrapment and sticky accelerator pedals. We will continue to monitor these issues closely."

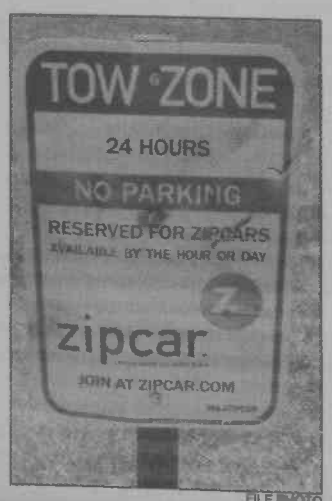
Nancy Scott, the director of corporate communications at Zipcar, said in an interview prior to the recall the company is working closely with Toyota and "will take appropriate action when notified."

When asked how long it would take to have substitute cars in place for the new Priuses, Scott said they have already delt with one Toyota recall with the Matrix, and the transition for the Prius would be easier because they make up less than 1percent of the entire Zipcar fleet.

Toyota has issued a recall on the 2004-2010 Prius models. At this time Elon had not heard from Zipcar.

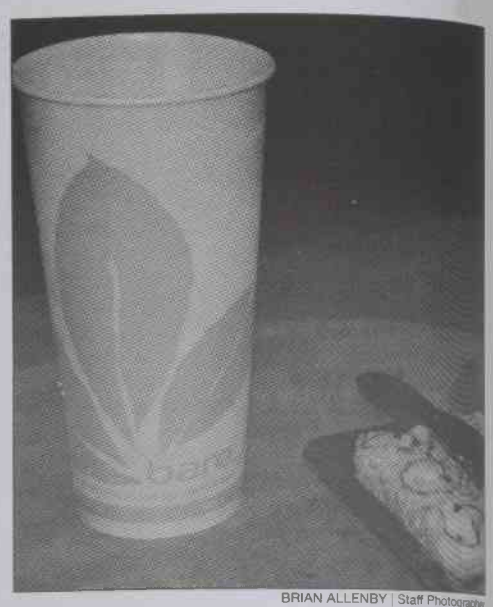
FILE PHOTO
Elon University students await a decision from Zipcar regarding the recall of the 2010 Prius models.

FILE PHOTO



FILE PHOTO

ARAMARK changes cups to eco-friendly



BRIAN ALLENBY | Staff Photographer
The new SoloBare cups are now located at all dining locations and are more eco-friendly than previous cups.

Sarah Carideo
Reporter

During Fake Break, ARAMARK dining services made the change from the clear plastic cups to new compostable paper ones.

The previously used Greenware plastic cups were gradually phased out in preparation for the new Solo Bare cups after Dining Services discovered the eco-friendly benefits of implementing the newer cups.

The Greenware cups were made from a natural corn-based material and were not recyclable. These cups were only effective if they were isolated then composted at a commercial facility, which is currently unavailable.

"Elon currently utilizes a commercial facility for composting organic materials from the two largest dining halls, Harden and Colonnades," Elaine Durr, Elon's sustainability coordinator said. "At this time, there are no compost bins available for use throughout campus. There is interest in providing such bins perhaps initially as a pilot project in one location."

Durr said an investigation into the necessity of the bins would precede implementation.

The Solo Bare cups have a less negative impact on the environment because they are made of paper and can be deposited in landfills, which is currently the only option for disposal.

Even though this is not the perfect situation, Assistant Food Service Director Ryan Moore said, "presently this is the best alternative that we have available."

Additionally, Durr said, it is important for students to be aware of the option to use their reusable water bottles as a way of reducing waste.

"The cups are part of the university's waste stream," she said. "Reducing the need for cups by using reusable bottles and mugs is essential to reducing the waste stream created by the cups," she said.

In addition to this benefit of supporting the university's initiatives towards sustainability, students benefit from the change because the Solo Bare cups are 22 ounces in comparison to the Greenware cups 20 ounces.

Although the measurement is only a slight change, it is a big hit with the students.

"I like to stay hydrated and refill my drinks frequently, so the increased size helps cut down on that," sophomore Katie O'Brien said.

Other perks brought up by students were that the cups do not seem to perspire as much, and they also seem to keep your hands warmer when carrying cold drinks across campus.

Despite these positive aspects, some students are bothered by the aesthetics of the new cups. Many do not like that they are unable to see how much of and what the contents are. The old cups were viewed to be clean and modern looking.

"I just think the color of the cups makes them appear to be dirty," freshman Sam Parker said.