

# Tired of being green?

by Martin Smith - NAFD Environmental Consultant

Are you recycling your waste and using low energy light bulbs but still being told that our planet is warming up? Do you wonder if there's any point carrying on being green when no-one else seems to be doing much about it?

Well you're not alone. Many people are beginning to question the value of their own green activities and there is a growing cynicism that many businesses are using environmentalism just to enhance their image. Not knowing what to do about endangered animal species and disappearing ice caps can lead to an air of apathy and disillusionment. Scepticism is understandable when a company such as BP extols its environmental credentials but is involved in a disastrous offshore oil leak.

Often the message from celebrities can appear to be "do as I say, not as I do". The occupancy of the vehicles used to chauffeur the performers to the Live Earth concerts could be questioned, also whether the event organiser had a robust environmental policy to reduce the energy consumption for the stage lighting and sound system. Was the litter left by the crowd collected and disposed of correctly? However, the answer to all these things is 'yes'!

Nowadays, everyone including celebrities and businesses can make efforts to reduce their impact on the environment. Obviously carbon emissions cannot be reversed by carbon offsetting. Celebrities, business and society will have to change behaviour, firstly by reducing emissions through best practice and then "offsetting" by investing in green energy projects or paying for trees to be replanted in damaged forests. Your funeral business is consumer facing and can benefit by leading by example.

The only way to sustain the Earth's resources for the future is for everyone to make

fundamental changes to their daily life. It is easy to enhance your own "green" reputation by motivating your staff to move forward with simple local level initiatives, such as saving some nearby parkland or getting involved in a local project. Such small steps will build up your reputation, create links with your community and help save the planet!

## Small actions that make a big difference

- Change to energy-efficient light bulbs. These are usually 3 to 5 times more efficient. Maybe a local church or hospice could benefit.
- Start a community directory listing local goods and services.
- Recycle or collect, your business could be a collection point for a local Christmas initiative.

These are just a few suggestions about how your business can be kinder to the planet and genuinely link in with the community and green consumer.

## FAQ: Why do I need an environmental policy?

The general public think that most businesses make too much money without paying proper attention to social responsibility. As a member of the funeral trade your company already has strong social values, and it is important for everyone in the funeral industry to move forward to keep up with growing customer awareness of many environmental issues associated with their daily life and, nowadays, death. The detrimental effect that some end-of-life activities have on the environment can be reduced by adopting a responsible approach to environmental management.

Many customers are looking for an assurance that risks to the environment are minimised, and some are choosing to use funeral services where a tangible commitment to environmental management can be demonstrated. To make sure your business keeps one step ahead in the funeral industry and to maintain your good public image you need to show a commitment to protecting the environment.

By publishing your own environmental policy statement you will enhance the reputation of your business as well as making sure you retain your existing business and increase new business. This will also be a step towards reducing your costs by minimising the usage of energy and materials.

The National Association of Funeral Directors' Environmental Advisory Group will encourage and support members of the trade association in developing good practice within the funeral industry in matters relating to the environment.

