

# GOING GREEN in the Federal Government



By Kim Doner, CPPM and David Robbins, CPPM Federal Center Chapter

**W**e are often asked about federal agencies and “green disposal.” Federal agencies strive to perform “compliant” disposal, but what exactly is “green disposal” and given all the rules and regulations surrounding the disposal of federal surplus personal property, what can we do to make sure we are “green” when performing disposal?

Searches on Yahoo and Google both resulted in the same general

consensus...“green disposal” equals “recycling.” There are all kinds of companies that provide recycling services from glass to plastic to batteries to cell phones to electronics. It is big business. In California alone the recycling industry “accounts for 85,000 jobs, generates \$4 billion in salaries and wages, and produces \$10 billion worth of goods and services annually.”<sup>1</sup> And then checking dictionary.com, its definition of

“recycling” includes “reuse” in several possible interpretations of the word.

Have you heard the phrase “reduce, reuse, recycle?” Most of us are familiar with the “recycle” part, but don’t often consider the first two words in the phrase. In the federal government, we “reduce” by identifying and then reporting our excess property in the hopes that someone else will be able to “reuse” it.

The Federal Disposal Program is a reuse program, so in that context, it can certainly be considered a “green” program. Overall, our efforts are geared towards finding alternative uses for property and avoiding the government’s property from becoming waste and ending up in landfills.

What causes property to become excess in the first place? Usage, modifications to equipment, changes in manpower, cost reduction programs, technological developments, and war are the primary causes of excess personal property in the federal government. Once identified and reported, we attempt to first reuse it within our own agencies, and if there are no takers, then we report it to either the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service (DRMS) for the Department of Defense (DoD) or the General Services Administration (GSA) for all other federal agencies. Once reported, the hope is that another federal agency can reuse the property. We call this “reutilization.” That is really what recycling is all about. Reusing something for either its intended purpose or for an alternate purpose.

The best way for federal agencies to locate property that is available for reuse is the GSAXcess® database at <http://gsaxcess.gov/>. Anyone with a “.mil” or “.gov” email address can self register to see what property is available for reuse; however, you need to obtain a login and password to report property and/or select property for reuse (transfer).

A recent search on office supplies in GSAXcess® resulted in available copy paper, tape, notebooks, paint sticks, and toner cartridges all in

new condition. A search on FSC 8415 showed everything from cold weather clothing, mittens, knee and elbow pads, to firefighter helmets in new condition. Furniture searches provided enough results to furnish a small town!

With over five million items of supply identified in the federal cataloging system, whatever you need is bound to show up at one time or another!

This business of “reutilization” really should begin in the procurement or acquisition division of any agency. If replacement property cannot be found in the GSA systems, there is always the possibility of talking a manufacturer into giving you a trade in credit when purchasing replacement property. This is allowed under Federal Management Regulation (FMR) 102-39, more commonly known as the Exchange/Sale FMR.

At the NPMA NES in 2007, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) presented a briefing about their use of the exchange program. Under a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) to purchase over 24,000 computers they had worked out an exchange agreement with the manufacturer. For every computer they purchased, they could exchange one that was being replaced and not only would they avoid the cost of paying for disposal of the old computer, they would receive a credit toward the purchase of the new computer! They were met with a lot of skepticism on doing an exchange on such a large scale. However, after just two years of exchanging replaced computers it was reported that they had processed over 918,926 lbs of IT equipment

and recycled 73,192 lbs of lead through this program. According to the EPA, the energy savings is equal to generating enough electricity to power 7,330 US households, gas reduction equal to removing 5,179 passenger cars off the roadways, and reductions of 343,339 metric tons of air emissions and 718 metric tons of water emissions. All totaled, the environmental savings comes to over \$14 million.

Not bad for going “green” and then, of course, there is the added disposal cost avoidance and the credit back to the agency to decrease the cost of the replacement computers. All in all, a worthwhile effort that has saved the agency, and the taxpayers, a considerable amount of money.

Not everything qualifies for exchange, so if your property is not being replaced then you have to proactively seek out potential users. If you have IT equipment, try to locate an eligible recipient under GSA’s Computers for Learning program, or see if the equipment qualifies for transfer under the Stevenson Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980. Even if it’s reported as excess to GSA, don’t be a passive reporter. Call around to try to find other federal agencies that use that same type of equipment and let them know they can request it through GSAXcess®.

Contact your state agency for surplus property and let them know what you have available. You can view the website for the National Association of State Agency’s for Surplus Property at <http://www.nasasp.org/v4/>.

All aspects of the Federal Disposal Program are aimed at reuse:

- Utilization is Reuse...

<sup>1</sup> Recycling: Good for the Economy, Good for the Environment  
<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Publications/Economics/41004002.pdf>.

- Donation is Reuse...
- Computers for Learning is Reuse...
- Sales offers property for Reuse...

Even exchange/sale, although not a disposal program, is a reuse program as demonstrated by the FAA example above. And if we look at the results of these programs, we all do a good job of keeping property out of the waste stream. The overall value of property reused through federal transfer, the Donation Program and Computers for Learning, totaled over \$730 million in the government's fiscal year 2009, and that doesn't even include additional property reused within the original owning agency or the additional hundreds of millions of dollars of property successfully sold for further use in the private sector.

Go Green! Consider alternatives before you take that property to the dump or pay someone to haul it away for you! ■

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

**Kim Doner, CPPM** is employed by SRA International as contractor support to the Federal Aviation Administration. Kim is responsible for interpreting policy as it pertains to excess and surplus personal property and drafting process and procedure guides for FAA property personnel. She worked as a federal employee for nineteen years including nine years at the US Army Logistics Management College as an instructor in property accountability and disposal. Kim is currently the chairperson of the Excess Property Disposition SIG for NPMA and is an At-Large Executive Committee Member of ASTM Committee E53 on Property and Asset Management Standards.

**David Robbins, CPPM** is Director of the Office of Personal Property Management in GSA's Federal Acquisition Service. Dave has over 28 years of experience in the Federal Property Management Program with prior experience at the Defense Logistics Agency and Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service. Dave is a member of both the Federal Property and Excess Property Disposition Special Interest Groups. In his current position, Dave administers a government-wide asset management program through which the federal government's excess surplus and exchange/sale property is transferred among federal agencies and donated to eligible recipients or disposed through competitive sales. In 2008, Dave was the recipient of NPMA's Federal Property Manager of the Year Award.