



July 2009 Newsletter

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Gabriel Gazette

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Dry Cleaners Pollution a "Sinking" Problem

Dry cleaners are one of the biggest culprits of spilling pollutants which contaminate soil and groundwater. Most dry cleaning facilities use a chemical called [perchloroethylene, or PERC](#), in their cleaning processes. PERC is a volatile, highly stable, and nonflammable chemical, which make it an ideal for substitute for highly flammable chemicals like petroleum and kerosene used initially in cleaning processes, to disastrous results.

However, this chemical has been classified as a type 2A carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, meaning its association to causing cancer is highly probable. PERC can be absorbed through both the skin and the respiratory system. When spilled into soil, its density allows it to sink below the [water table](#), or "surface" of groundwater levels, often creating a much more egregious problem than mere soil contamination.

There are many ways to remediate soil contaminated by PERC and similar chemicals which may have been spilled by dry cleaners. Gabriel has more than 35 years of working with the IEPA, UESPA and MWRD, and has worked with dozens of dry cleaners to bring their sites into compliance.



If you have any questions about how dry cleaner contamination might affect you, contact [John Polich](#) at (773) 486-2123.

First Mandatory Composting Law in U.S.

On June 23rd, Mayor Gavin Newsom signed into law [the first](#)

Bethel, AK Bans Plastic Bags



Bethel, Alaska became the newest city to ban plastic bags after city leaders voted in early July to enact the measure.

The ban, which also applies to foam containers and makes an exception for biodegradable bags, is slated to begin in September 2010.

Bethel, which serves as a

rural hub to many villages in Western Alaska, does not have curbside pickup. Residents must take their garbage to a dumpster, where wind and birds often disperse the bags across the tundra.

As David Stovner, manager of the Bethel recycling center says, "It looks like white geese out there. Eight million of them."

Free Reusable Bag

Gabriel supports the use of reusable bags in order to lower our global waste. If you are interested in receiving a **FREE** reusable bag, email [Erin Polich](mailto:Erin.Polich).

Greenversations

Did you know the EPA has a blog? Read up on ways to save energy, compliance, and issues surrounding human and environmental health at **Greenversations**:

www.blog.epa.gov/blog

Environmental Links

[Environmental Protection Agency](http://www.epa.gov)

[Illinois Environmental Protection Agency](http://www.epa.gov)

Biking Bits

[mandatory composting law](#) in the country. Under this new law, residents of San Francisco are required to now have 3 garbage bins: one for waste, a second for recycling, and a third for food and yard waste.



In a statement made Mayor Newsom, he stated, "A number of years ago, San Francisco set a lofty green goal--we wanted to divert 75 percent of our resources from the landfill by 2010 and achieve zero waste by 2020. At the time, many people thought our targets were overly ambitious.

However, San Francisco is poised to meet these goals. We are currently keeping 72 percent of recyclable material out of our landfill."

Indeed Mayor Newsom proposes an ambitious goal, but composting food and other biodegradable waste materials will divert a significant amount of waste from landfills. Additionally, the waste currently being composted is already in high demand from local vineyards and farms.

Chicago's Net-Zero House Includes Geothermal

Chicago now can boast that it has its [very first net-zero building](#). This newest Ravenswood home, designed by the sustainable urban developing firm, Farr Associates, has a plethora of energy-efficient devices, including solar energy panels, solar water thermal panels, and **geothermal heat pumps**. Other environmentally friendly aspects of the house include using recycled newspaper to create the kitchen counters, installing rain barrels, and wall tiles made of recycled green glass bottles.

What is a net-zero energy home?

A net-zero energy home is capable of producing, at minimum, an annual output of renewable energy that is equal to the total amount of its annual consumed/purchased energy from energy utilities.

Those who wish to build energy efficient homes often hesitate at the notion of going so far as to build a net-zero energy home, simply because the costs upfront are higher. Geothermal heat pumps, for instance, cost more to install initially, but use natural and renewable resources and can provide payback within 3-4 years!

How Can Gabriel Help?

Are you considering switching to an energy efficient house or an office? Then [geothermal technology](#) might be right for you.

In addition to the obvious financial benefits which renewable energy sources offer for your future bills, **current federal tax credits of 30% of installation costs for homeowners and 10% for businesses are now available**, which will offset the initial costs for using a geothermal system. Gabriel is pleased to offer geothermal energy services. Contact [John Polich](#) at (773) 486-2123 to learn



In Chicago, if you ride your bike during hours when it is dark, you are required by law to have 2 lights on your bike:

A front-facing **white** light must be visible a minimum distance of 500 ft. away.

A rear-facing **red** reflector or light must be visible up to 200 ft. away.

If there you get into an accident at night without proper lights on your bike, **you** may be found at fault for the accident.

Chicago Bike Maps

Looking to map your bike route to work? IDOT has maps on their website which detail bike-friendly streets and paths throughout Illinois - an asset especially for those who find it difficult to find bike routes in suburban areas.

more.

Record Aluminum Recycling Rates

Novelis, Inc. [announced recently](#) that they recycled a record 39 billion aluminum cans in their last fiscal year: a new company record! The company's plant in Berea, Kentucky, is the largest dedicated can recycling facility in the world.

Beverage cans account for approximately one-half the aluminum scrap Novelis Inc. recycles each year, and each can makes a difference. As Nick Madden, VP of global procurement and metal management for Novelis, says, "Every aluminum can that is recycled saves enough energy to run a television set for three hours."

According to the EPA, creating new aluminum products from recovered material [requires only 5%](#) of the energy required by making the same amount of aluminum from raw materials such as bauxite.

Gabriel is proud to encourage recycling at our facilities. Our commitment to sustainability is daily and on-going. To read more about our priorities and accomplishments on this front, visit our website [here](#).



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