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The ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge

(Source: American Bar Association, ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge, at <http://www.abanet.org/environ/climatechallenge/overview.shtml>)

Overview

The American Bar Association (ABA) Section of Environment, Energy and Resources (SEER), in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is pleased to present the ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge (Climate Challenge). The Climate Challenge is designed to encourage law offices to take specific steps to conserve energy and resources, as well as reduce emissions of greenhouse gases - which cause global climate change - and other pollutants. The ABA Law Practice Management Section (LPM) is co-sponsoring this initiative.

Law offices may meet the Climate Challenge simply by undertaking best practices for office paper management or by participating in one or more of three EPA partnership (i.e., voluntary) programs. Specifically, law offices may:

- 1) Adopt best practices for office paper management by reducing paper usage, increasing recycled content in paper purchased, or increasing recycling.
- 2) Participate in EPA's WasteWise program, which encourages organizations to save energy by reducing waste, and adopt best practices for office paper management (described above).
- 3) Participate in EPA's Green Power Partnership (Green Power) program by purchasing energy from renewable sources to cover at least a portion of electricity usage.

4) Participate in EPA's ENERGY STAR program, which encourages law offices to reduce energy use by at least 10% through, among other things, the purchase of ENERGY STAR-designated equipment and implementation of better energy management practices. This program has features that recognize the issues associated with tenant law offices.

Application procedures are streamlined for participation in the Law Office Climate Challenge and in these EPA programs. Participating law offices will receive recognition from the ABA and those that join the EPA programs will receive recognition from EPA, in accordance with those programs' requirements. Specifically, a law office that simply adopts best practices for office paper management or that meets the minimum requirements for participation in at least one of the EPA programs, qualifies for recognition as a Law Office Climate Challenge Partner. A law office that achieves a higher level of participation in at least one of the EPA programs qualifies as a Law Office Climate Challenge Leader. Qualifying law offices will be recognized, and, for those that participate in EPA programs, the amounts of greenhouse gas emissions avoided by their actions will be posted, on the ABA's Law Office Climate Challenge Website.

The Climate Challenge is a two-year pilot project initiated in March 2007.

The Four Component Programs of the Law Office Climate Challenge

Adopt Best Practices for Office Paper Management

Law offices tend to be paper-intensive, which leaves a meaningful carbon footprint because the production and disposal of paper consumes substantial amounts of energy and generates significant quantities of greenhouse gas emissions. An informal survey conducted by Arnold & Porter of eight law firms, ranging in size from small to large, in several areas of the country, found that copier/printer paper use ranged from about 20,000 to about 100,000 sheets per attorney at those firms during 2006. This amount corresponds to about 10-50 sheets per work hour (assuming 2,000 work hours per year). The high end of this range – 100,000 sheets per attorney -- amounts to a half-ton of paper use per attorney per year. The life-cycle of a ton of paper, from production to recycling, results in the generation of about 9 tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) - equivalent greenhouse gas emissions. (Disposal in a landfill results in two more tons of such emissions per year.)

Law offices can undertake simple and effective best practices to improve office paper management, including:

- 1) Assure that at least approximately 90 percent of all types of copier, printer, letterhead, and bond paper, as well as business and manila envelopes purchased have at least 30% post-consumer recycled content. As a practical matter, a law office can implement this practice by adopting a policy that 100% of its future purchases of copier/printer paper have at least 30% post-consumer recycled content.
- 2) Recycle at least approximately 90 percent of discarded mixed office paper (defined as all types of white copier and printer paper, bond and letterhead paper, note paper, colored paper, and

envelopes). As a practical matter, a law office can implement this practice by establishing an office-wide policy of recycling these materials and assuring that all office personnel have ready access to recycling bins.

3) Institute a policy of double-sided printing and copying for drafts and internal documents. As a practical matter, a law office can implement this practice by setting copiers and printers on double-sided as the default mode and by making reasonable acquisitions of software and attachments as needed to enable double-sided as the default mode.

A law office that adopts at least two of those three best practices will qualify as a "Law Office Climate Challenge Partner."

A more detailed description of best practices for office paper management and the Climate Challenge process is included in ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge: Adopt Best Practices for Office Paper Management; Participate in the EPA WasteWise Program.

Participate in the EPA WasteWise Program

Law offices may choose to participate in the Law Office Climate Challenge by adopting generally the same best practices for office paper management as described above, and by doing so through participation in EPA's WasteWise program, which in turn offers benefits of additional recognition and technical assistance. WasteWise is a voluntary program that encourages organizations to reduce municipal solid waste, including paper waste. A law office may register with WasteWise and submit a plan for office paper management that entails meeting at least two of the three best practices described above. The law office that does so will receive recognition from WasteWise as a "Partner" and from SEER as a "Law Office Climate Challenge Partner." The law office may then implement its plan and file an annual report with WasteWise that confirms that it has met its goals, including, for double-sided copying and printing, using the double-sided mode for at least 50% of the pages copied and printed, as determined through practical, good faith estimates. A law office that achieves these goals and quantifies its reductions in paper usage or paper waste - and it may use reasonable approximations in doing so - qualifies as a "Law Office Climate Challenge Leader." Simple software calculators are available to translate those reductions into amounts of reductions in CO₂ - equivalent greenhouse gas emissions, and the ABA will include those amounts on its Law Office Climate Challenge Website. A more detailed description of best practices for office paper management, the WasteWise program, best practices for office paper management, and the Climate Challenge process, is included in ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge: Adopt Best Practices for Office Paper Management; Participate in the WasteWise Program.

Purchase Renewable Energy through the EPA Green Power Partnership Program

Participating in EPA's Green Power Partnership program (Green Power Partnership) offers a law office the opportunity to cover at least part of its electricity usage through green power, that is, power from renewable energy sources.

Specifically, under this program, the law office agrees to purchase a minimum amount of megawatt hours of green power products, which are electric power products generated by certain

types of new sources of renewable energy. The payments improve the profitability of renewable energy providers and thereby support the generation of more green power to replace electricity generated by coal and other higher emitting and nonrenewable sources. The required minimum amount is calculated by reference to a percentage of the organization's annual electricity use, and ranges from 10% if the organization's annual electricity use is relatively low to 2% if the organization's annual electricity use is relatively high. EPA recognizes organizations that buy at least the minimum amount as "Green Power Partners." Partners who purchase additional green power in specified amounts or more qualify for membership in the Green Power Leadership Club. The program includes a special calculation methodology for law offices that lease their space. Any law office can participate in Green Power, regardless of whether renewable energy is available through that organization's utility provider.

The American Bar Association (ABA) will recognize a law office that achieves recognition as a Green Power Partner or a member of the Green Power Leadership Club as, respectively, a Law Climate Challenge Partner or a Law Office Climate Challenge Leader. A more detailed description of the Green Power program, the purchase of green power products, and the Climate Challenge process, is included in ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge: Purchase Renewable Energy through the Green Power Partnership Program.

Take Steps to Reduce Energy Use By 10% Through the ENERGY STAR Program

The ABA and EPA's ENERGY STAR program have developed a "Law Office Guide to Energy Efficiency" that encourages law offices to reduce energy usage by 10%. ENERGY STAR, recognized by a significant majority of the American public, encourages improvements in the energy-efficiency of a wide range of consumer and commercial products and buildings, and promotes energy management planning for businesses and other organizations.

Important steps that many law offices can take, among many others, to improve energy efficiency including:

- 1) As office equipment of all types wear out, replace them with more energy-efficient ENERGY STAR labeled equipment. This includes computers, monitors, printers, copiers, and facsimile machines.
- 2) Turn off lights, computers, copiers, printers, and other equipment when not in use.
- 3) Replace incandescent or halogen lamps with compact fluorescents (CFL).
- 4) Use daylighting as much as possible, instead of lights.
- 5) Enable power-down management software on networked computers. Make sure screensavers are used.
- 6) Upgrade the ambient fluorescent lighting system by replacing the T12 lamps with more energy-efficient T8 or T5 systems, and upgrade exit signs to use light-emitting diode (LED) lamps.
- 7) Use automatic lighting controls such as dimming systems that reduce light when natural daylight is available; and occupancy and motion sensors for, among other things, conference rooms, kitchens, storage rooms, and restrooms. Consider occupancy sensors that power down computer equipment, task lights, and other plug load equipment.

- 8) Educate cleaning crews to shut off miscellaneous items such as office lights, coffee pots, and other equipment when not used.
- 9) Inform employees about the many opportunities for energy efficiency improvements at home.

The extent to which law offices that lease their space can implement these, and other, energy-efficient actions, depends on their lease provisions covering responsibility for facilities and payment of electricity costs. Even if a tenant law office faces significant constraints in implementing an energy efficiency plan, the Law Office Guide to Energy Management provides a basis for negotiating energy-efficiency improvements with the building owner or for considering energy efficiency in seeking new office space.

Law offices can enroll in EPA's ENERGY STAR program by making a good faith commitment to improve energy efficiency. A law office that does so qualifies for recognition as an ENERGY STAR partner and becomes entitled to use the program's familiar logo. The law office may then enroll in the ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge program, which encourages law offices to reduce by at least 10% their energy usage, if they own their building, or their electricity usage, if they are a tenant. The ABA encourages law offices to report their energy or electricity savings, and an office that achieves at least a 10% reduction will earn recognition as a Law Office Climate Challenge Leader. A more detailed description of the ENERGY STAR program and the Climate Challenge process is included in ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge: Reduce Energy Use By 10% Through the ENERGY STAR Program. More information about law office energy management is included in the Law Office Guide to Energy Efficiency.

Enrollment in the Law Office Climate Challenge Program

To enroll, please complete the ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge Enrollment Form, and following the instructions and submission information included. To submit updates, please use the ABA-EPA Law Office Climate Challenge Update Form.