

The Valley Hospital Turns Food Waste into Water

When The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, NJ set out to change the way their food waste was impacting the environment, they selected The Eco-Safe Digester™, a food waste "digester," as a solution equipped to manage this change. "We were looking for a dynamic solution which was both productive to the environment as well as "budget-friendly." The Eco-Safe Digester not only met this criterion, but unlike, composting, eliminated "bagging and dragging" rituals associated with traditional waste management protocol," said Howard Halverson, Director of Environmental Services of The Valley Hospital.

"After the food industry, U.S. hospitals are the second largest generators of food waste. Of the 6,600 tons of waste generated daily by hospitals, 17% of that is food waste." ¹ The EPA strongly advises organizations that generate high volumes of food waste to find ways to divert their waste from landfills. The Eco-Safe Digester, distributed in the U.S. by New Jersey-based BioHitech America, provides organizations that generate high volumes of food waste a sound economical solution to the EPA's call to action. "We assessed the impact our waste was having on the environment. We realized that taking ownership in the way we managed our waste was mandatory," explained Halverson. "Installing the Eco-Safe Digester has eliminated our food waste from the solid waste stream and, as a result, reduced the overall volume of waste going to landfills. The fact that the solution also trimmed our hauling bill by 20% is icing on the cake," continued Halverson.

The Valley Hospital is leading its industry as one of the first hospitals to install the Eco-Safe Digester technology. The award-winning technology is an aerobic digestion process that uses proprietary microbe technology to liquefy food waste in less than 24 hours. The process is realized in a steel chamber that has similar aspirations to a living stomach. "Using the Eco-Safe Digester cuts out an entire segment of the traditional disposal process," says Mike Franco, Vice President of Sales at BioHitech. "Kitchen operations, once burdened by time consuming waste management protocol, now have more time to dedicate to customer-related tasks and to issues more relevant to the bottom line. Employees spend more time working, not wasting," continued Franco.

Instead of using big, fuel-burning garbage trucks to deposit food waste into landfills where it takes up space and creates harmful greenhouse gases, the Eco-Safe Digester sends waste down the drain into sanitary sewer systems where it is safely processed and released back into the ecosystem as water. The result for the end user is not only a smaller carbon footprint, but also a smaller waste bill now that the waste is processed on site, versus being hauled away by a carting service. "The benefits of the Eco-Safe Digester to the environment cannot be reckoned with; however, the benefits span way beyond the environment. Not only does the technology reduce potential for injury as employees "journey" the wet waste to what feels like the center of the Earth on some days, but it provides a more sanitary workplace for them. As a hospital, sanitation is a top concern to us," proclaims Halverson.

The Eco-Safe Digester became a part of The Valley Hospital's operation in October 2009. The transition from "hauler" to the "digester" was seamless. Within days of installation and training, the Eco-Safe Digester was embraced as a team member further serving to unite staff and management across the board at a very fundamental level--pride and enthusiasm in the "green" initiatives of their organization. "As with any new process, after the learning curve the operational logistics of the Eco-Safe Digester shifted into autopilot, and the benefits of the system became what were observed, not the day-to-day operational protocol," says Halverson. Accordingly, BioHitech's training program doesn't end until all staff is comfortable and proficient on all levels of system operation. An in-house "coach" from BioHitech is assigned to each new customer to ensure successful acclimation of product into each unique infrastructure.

Halverson explained the process in his organization: "With the machine conveniently positioned in our kitchen, our employees walk a couple of feet, open the hatch to the machine, and add the waste. Within hours of entering the machine, the waste is liquefied and on its 30-day jaunt back to the ecosystem where it presents as water, a natural resource that is necessary to sustain life. And isn't that the point?"

Carey, Lisa. (May 14, 2010). Eliminating the Wastefulness of Medical Waste with Environmentally Friendly Alternatives. Retrieved May 14, 2010 from the Associated Content: http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2999610/eliminating_the_wastefulness_of_medical.