



UNITED STATES  
POSTAL SERVICE

HEADQUARTERS



# DELIVERING A GREENER TOMORROW

USPS Sustainability Vice President Sam Pulcrano walks the talk. Or, in this case, drives it.

— By George T. Maffett Jr. —

Every business day since taking the helm as the Postal Service's top champion of "green," Sam Pulcrano gets in his hybrid electric car at his home in a nearby Virginia suburb and commutes to USPS Headquarters in southwest Washington, DC.

The Postal Service has a long history of environmental stewardship, a fact not lost on the people who work there, so it's a good bet that with 600,000 fellow employees, Pulcrano isn't the only postal person driving an alternative fuel vehicle to work.

And since USPS has the largest fleet of civilian vehicles in the world — 217,000 — it's likely that some of those employees, especially if they are letter carriers, will get out of their personal green vehicle and step into one of the Postal Service's 44,000 alternative fuel-capable delivery vehicles.

## Big Organization, Big Environmental Responsibility

In 2009, USPS employees drove more than 1.2 billion miles to deliver 177 billion packages and letters to nearly 150 million addresses in the United States. That takes a lot of fuel.

No question, the Postal Service is a big organization; in fact, it's the second largest civilian employer in the country, behind Walmart. So reducing its environmental impact is the responsibility of the entire organization. Coordinating that effort is Pulcrano's job.

The Postal Service established the Office of Sustainability in 2008 to coordinate its energy, fuel, recycling and sustainability programs across its more than 33,000 owned facilities, its fleet and its employees.

Pulcrano, a 35-year postal veteran, is the point person for a variety of USPS Sustainability efforts — from developing a conservation culture to helping implement cross-functional Green Teams that look for ways to reduce the Postal Service's carbon footprint and lower its environmental impact. Although the Postal Service has been quietly green for years, the word about its environmental efforts is getting out. Recently, the sustainability VP was asked to testify before the U.S. Senate on USPS Sustainability initiatives, and its move to a greener work style.

"It really is a team effort — our Facilities department has done a tremendous job upgrading our buildings to be more energy efficient. Our Environmental Policy and Programs group heads our recycling initiatives — both internally and in our lobbies," Pulcrano says. "Our IT department has helped us make tremendous strides in reducing energy and paper consumption, and our engineering team has long tested some of the most cutting-edge alternative fuel vehicles in existence."

## Promoting Cutting-Edge Transportation for a Century

For the Postal Service, cutting-edge transportation is nothing new. USPS tested one of the earliest electric cars more than a century ago, in 1899. In fact, USPS has been at the forefront of every transportation innovation — from steamboats to railroads to airplanes. If it helps transport the mail faster, the Postal Service has been interested in it (see sidebar).

“Many people don’t realize it, but it was Post Office mail contracts that literally got the fledgling airline industry off the ground,” Pulcrano says. “Airports, airways and navigation aids sprang up across the United States as a result of mail transportation contracts.”

But as the nation and the mail delivery network expanded, so did the Postal Service’s carbon footprint, culminating in 2008 when USPS used nearly 147 million gasoline gallon equivalents of petroleum-based fuel.

Since that time, Pulcrano and his team have led a drive to reduce postal petroleum-based fuel use 20% by 2015.

That’s in line with the timeline established by President Obama’s Executive Order 13514 for government agencies to reach that same reduction percentage. The Postal Service, by the way, as an independent federal agency, doesn’t come under the recent Executive Order, but is voluntarily participating, anyway.

## Off to a Good Start

In 2009, USPS reduced its petroleum fuel use by 4.5% while adding nearly one million delivery points to its network and continuing its record-setting delivery performance.

Like every other business in these challenging economic times, USPS did it by tightening its belt and doing more with less. Thanks to the hard work of the Postal Service’s Delivery

Operations and an outstanding effort by its field employees, USPS was able to remove 11,000 routes from its delivery network. Route reductions contributed greatly to the Postal Service being able to take 6,000 additional vehicles off the roads since the start of 2009.

“We also began optimizing our carrier routes — making sure that we were delivering our mail along the most efficient line of travel possible,” Pulcrano explains. “If we can reduce our mileage, we’ll reduce our fuel use — and our impact on the environment.”

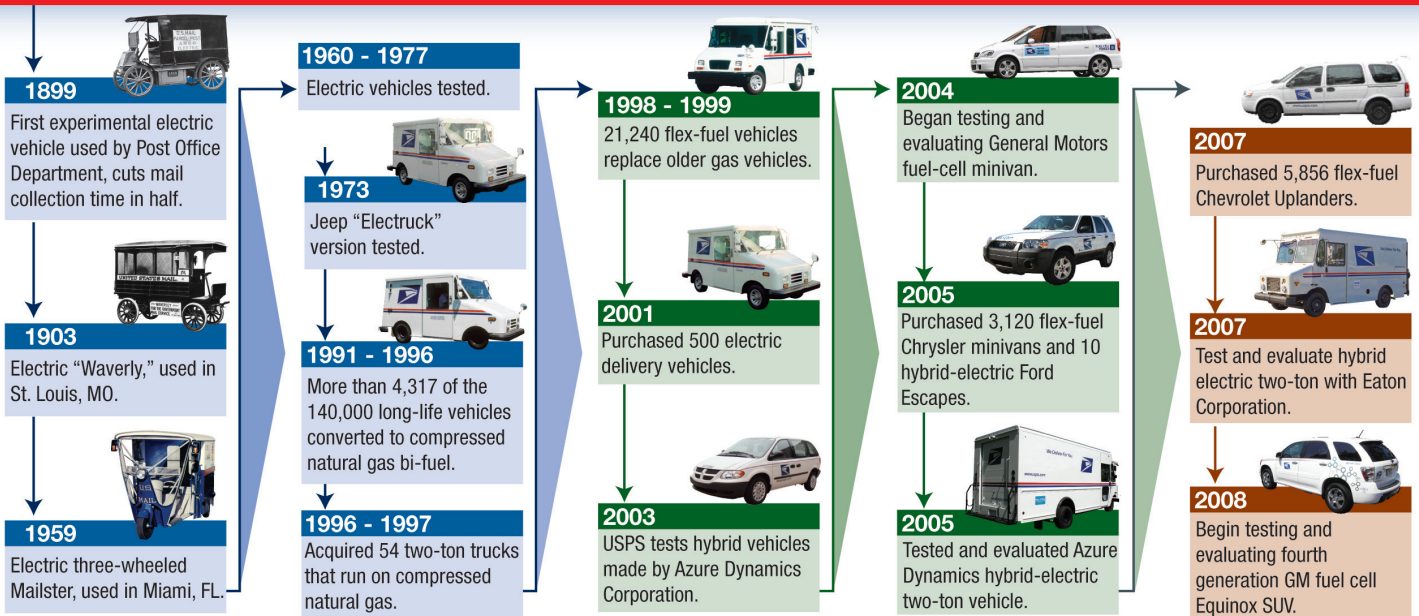
The Postal Service’s earliest attempts at greening its fleet met with varying levels of success, but in 1991, it began converting more than 4,000 of its long-life vehicles to run on compressed natural gas (CNG). These were so successful that between 1996 and 1997, the Postal Service purchased 54 two-ton trucks that run on CNG.

In 1998, USPS started replacing more than 21,000 older gasoline vehicles with flex-fuel ones. Since then, it has acquired additional electric and hybrid-electric vehicles. In 2004, the Postal Service began testing and evaluating a hydrogen fuel cell vehicle from General Motors. A second hydrogen fuel cell vehicle joined the pilot effort in 2008.

“But it’s not just our alternative fuel-capable four-wheeled vehicles that are keeping us on the green track,” says Pulcrano. “We also have three-wheeled electric vehicles helping us deliver mail in Florida, Arizona and California.”

Greener still are the nearly 70 bicycle routes throughout Florida and Arizona. It’s estimated that these bike routes conserve 15,000 gallons of gasoline each year compared to traditional USPS delivery vehicles and eliminate 50,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

## Early Innovators of Alternative Fuel Vehicle Technology



But the greenest of the green? The more than 9,000 carrier routes that are delivered on foot. "Our 'fleet of feet' are among the smallest carbon footprints in their communities."

### A Culture of Conservation

Engaging 600,000 employees in creating a conservation culture requires a serious commitment to Sustainability. To help build on its already rich tradition of eco-conscious activities, USPS formed Green Teams in 19 pilot sites throughout the country.

The cross-functional teams applied Lean Six Sigma tools to identify sustainable opportunities at local sites. The result was a slew of best practices for saving energy, conserving water and reducing waste and fuel that can be shared among all facilities. Here are just a few of them:

In Pittsburgh, a trash compactor monitoring system notifies the local hauling company whenever there's a need to swap out its industrial-sized trash bin, saving the USPS thousands of dollars each year in hauling costs.

On Long Island, the newly completed Southampton Post Office features xeriscaping, a form of landscaping that uses drought-resistant vegetation to reduce irrigation costs.

And in hundreds of USPS facilities across the country, lighting upgrades are helping the Postal Service lower its lighting and energy bills — and reduce its carbon footprint.

And it's not just upgrades that are making a difference; an energy challenge in April 2009 featured a variety of low-cost, no-cost ways for employees to save energy, from setting thermostats to 65 in the winter and 78 in the summer to turning off lights when you're the last to leave a room and closing dock doors.

"We know the success of our Sustainability efforts ultimately depends on our employees," says Pulcrano. "They are the ones moving the mail. They see first-hand the opportunities to reduce, re-use and recycle."

### Corporate Stewardship

Eco-savvy shippers who want to minimize their environmental impact need look no further than the Postal Service. Among the many achievements of its Environmental Policy and Programs group, USPS has received the EPA's WasteWise Partner of the Year Award — the program's highest honor — for the 10<sup>th</sup> year in a row. The program recognizes organizations that reduce municipal and industrial solid waste. "Today, all of our districts are WasteWise partners, quite a jump from 2007, when just over 10% were enrolled," Pulcrano notes. EPA isn't the only government body to recognize the Postal Service's commitment to the environment. USPS has won the White House Closing the Circle Award 40 times since the program began back in 1995. It has received recognition for programs as diverse as its green purchasing program, lead-free wheel weights program and revenue-generating recycling program.

In 2008, USPS established a "zero waste to landfill" initiative to reduce the volume of solid waste generated from its Washington, DC headquarters facility. Its purpose is to reduce as near to zero as possible the amount of waste sent to landfills.

The program has since expanded to 18 pilot postal sites around the country. The San Mateo, California vehicle maintenance facility was recently recognized by the Postal Service for reducing its waste to landfill by 99%.

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Pulcrano says the Postal Service was further honored by Michelle Moore, the Obama Administration's Federal Environmental Executive, when she commented on October 15, 2009 that, "The Postal Service's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, energy use and petroleum fuel consumption demonstrates that federal agencies can lead by example."

One of those examples of USPS Sustainability leadership online is its green website. At [usps.com/green](http://usps.com/green), consumers can find hundreds of helpful facts and suggestions, along with smart tools and information to improve their own environmental awareness, measure their carbon emissions and create individual conservation plans. And just for children, there is a place for them to learn how to create green family trees.

A key feature of the site is the "Skip the Trip" calculator that shows consumers how to save money, fuel and energy by using Postal Service convenient online services to conduct their postal business from home or office at [usps.com](http://usps.com). It's another way the Postal Service helps customers make greener choices about their mail and their environment.

The Postal Service enjoys a unique relationship with its customers — it visits nearly every one of them on a daily basis. That's 150 million homes and businesses, six days a week, 52 weeks a year.

That kind of access to the customer's doorstep allows USPS to offer a greener alternative to folks than driving their packages to the local Post Office. Carrier Pickup is a service that lets customers schedule package pickups during a carrier's regular visit, at no additional charge. Customers shipping a Priority Mail or Express Mail package need only phone or go online to notify their local Post Office for package pickup.

Since letter carriers are in the neighborhood delivering mail already, taking advantage of USPS Carrier Pickup lowers the local carbon footprint by reducing the number of delivery vehicles visiting a neighborhood.

"We want to be the first mile and the last mile of delivery for America," says Pulcrano, "and we want to do it in the greenest way possible." ■

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For more information on USPS Sustainability efforts, visit their website at: [usps.com/green](http://usps.com/green).