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Press Relation Officer: Martin Ittershagen

Deputy Press Relation Officer: Stephan Gabriel Haufe

PR-staff: Fotini Mavromati, Marc Rathmann, Martin Stallmann

Office: Doreen Redlich, Uwe Weber

Telephone: 0340/2103 -2122, -6625, -2318, -2250, -2507, -2669, -2637

Address: Federal Environment Agency, P.O. box 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau

E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de

Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de

Facebook: www.facebook.com/umweltbundesamt.de



Video conferencing and natural lawnmowers

Federal Environment Agency to become even more environmentally friendly

The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) is issuing its 2011 EMAS Environmental Statement today, announcing ambitious goals in environmental protection within the Agency. "As a specialist environmental agency the Federal Environment Agency can only credibly promote environmental protection by setting a good example and proving that it works", are UBA President Jochen Flasbarth's comments on the in-house environmental goals set for the upcoming years. He conceded that "even after ten years of environmental management we occasionally discover things that can be optimized."

By 2014 UBA hopes to reduce its overall energy consumption by five percent and to produce two thirds more renewable energy. On a practical scale, business travel will increasingly be replaced by video conferencing, and the CO₂ emissions of the remaining cars in the fleet will be decreased by ten per cent. Staff will be encouraged to commute to work by more green modes of transport such as bus, train, bicycle or on foot, thereby increasing the staff's 'green' commute rate to more than two thirds. The Agency would also like to raise contracting parties' awareness and will include environmental conditions in all contracts starting late 2012. Suppliers of print and paper products must already ensure that the paper they use bears the Blue Angel eco-label. Leaseholders of the UBA canteen and the cleaning company must also meet an array of environmental conditions that include offering a wide selection of vegetarian dishes cooked with regionally sourced seasonal products or refraining from use of detergents that pollute the environment.

The most important instrument with which the Agency can achieve its ambitious goals is the environmental management system set out in the EC EMAS Regulation. EMAS stands for **Eco-Management and Audit Scheme**. The scheme ensures that environmental aspects are integrated in all remits, work processes and activities from the very beginning - from facility management and procurement to information and communication technology. Besides making improvements in energy, transport and procurement, UBA has also set its sights on land area use and biodiversity. Ecological aspects are taken into account in the landscaping and maintenance of the grounds in that as little space as possible is sealed, and precipitation percolates mainly on site. In the same vein, the Agency limits the use of motor-operated tools like leaf blowers and lawn

tractors and largely foregoes the use of road salt in winter. The landscaped areas on UBA grounds provide a habitat and biotope to native and adapted plants and many animal species. Nesting and breeding assistance to birds, setting up beehives, and the use of rare domestic sheep species as natural lawn mowers also help to enhance urban landscapes.

It is most opportune to expand on in-house environmental protection at the present time since a few construction and refurbishment projects at UBA are scheduled in the next few years. "By linking high environmental standards to construction measures we not only reduce pollution, we also make significant savings on such things as heating," said Flasbarth. An independent environmental verifier does an annual check of whether the goals and requirements of EMAS are being met. Flasbarth is convinced that this means more than merely boosting the role model function of the Agency: the divisions themselves benefit from their commitment to environmental management. "By observing stringent environmental standards in-house we are more sensitive to the problems experienced in the field, and it heightens our ability to empathize with those to whom environmental policies are directed."

Further information and links:

The 2011 EMAS Environmental Statement, featuring a detailed account of the responsibilities, activities and goals of UBA's in-house environmental management is here:

<http://www.uba.de/uba-info-medien/4241.html>

Dessau-Roßlau, 19 January 2012