

### What color is your agency?

The economy may not be the only “green” that President Obama is trying to save. While issues like rising unemployment rates and falling financial institutions have taken front-row seats in the president’s fledgling administration, another contentious issue looms: the environment, and how to fix it. Environmental stewardship played a key role in Obama’s campaign; and after less than a week in office, he made good.

In January 2009, the White House charged the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) with investigating whether California and several other states should be allowed to impose tougher standards on car-makers in an effort to fight greenhouse gas. The current president also aims to implement tough, new fuel-efficiency requirements on 2011 model vehicles, stressing, “I want to be clear from the beginning of this administration that we have made our choice: America will not be held hostage to dwindling resources, hostile regimes and a warming planet.”

Although much of the fuss subsequent to this announcement has been centered around the failing auto industry and dependence on foreign oil, the president’s stance on the environment is becoming ever clearer. Federal Government, take heed: with a president who personifies the old adage of “leading by doing”, it’s only a matter of time before tighter restrictions on energy- and resource consumption make their way to an Agency near you. In fact, the mechanism is already in-place to impose efficiency standards on the Federal Government courtesy of Executive Order 13423, “Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management”.

Issued in January 2007, EO 13423 calls on Federal agencies to conduct relevant activities in a fiscally- and environmentally responsible manner. It specifically mandates significant reductions in greenhouse gas-emissions, water consumption, and use of hazardous materials while increasing the use of renewable resources, sustainable environmental practices, and “green” building. Most of these goals have a deadline of 2015.

So, how are federal agencies doing? Similar to performance reporting for the President’s Management

### Executive Order 13423 At a Glance

- Increase purchase of alternative fuel, hybrid, and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles when commercially available.
- Reduce petroleum consumption in fleet vehicles by 2% annually through 2015.
- Increase alternative fuel consumption at least 10% annually.
- Reduce energy intensity by 3 % annually through 2015 or by 30% by 2015.
- At least 50% of current renewable energy purchases must come from new renewable sources (in service after January 1, 1999).
- Construct or renovate buildings in accordance with sustainability strategies, including resource conservation, reduction, and use; siting; and indoor environmental quality.
- Reduce water consumption intensity by 2% annually through 2015.
- Expand purchases of environmentally-sound goods and services, including biobased products.
- Reduce use of chemicals and toxic materials and purchase lower risk chemicals and toxic materials from top priority list.
- Annually, 95% of electronic products purchased must meet Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool standards where applicable; enable Energy Star® features on 100% of computers and monitors; and reuse, donate, sell, or recycle 100% of electronic products using environmentally sound management practices.
- Implement EMS at all appropriate organizational levels to ensure use of EMS as the primary management approach for addressing environmental aspects of internal agency operations and activities.

Agenda, OMB’s Environmental Stewardship Scorecard uses a stoplight rating system to track progress towards EO 13423 goals. Of the 23 agencies reporting in January 2008, there was an approximate equal split between red and yellow status scores. No agency scored green. Many have subsequently reported marked progress. For example, the Department of Commerce developed a pilot program to ensure that Energy Star features are enabled on all of its monitors and computers in compliance with the Electronic Stewardship goal. The yet-to-be-released January 2009 report will reveal if agencies are truly striving towards improvement.

Granted, it is not uncommon for previous EOs to be rescinded or simply ignored. However, with a president who recently appropriated tens of billions to environment and energy projects through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, overturning environmental mandates is highly unlikely. So, quite simply, it’s time for federal agencies to join the environmental bandwagon and make serious efforts to improve their scorecard standings. In this new era, “getting to green” and “going green” are sure to be one and the same.

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