

*reprinted with permission of Rosemount This Week

Partnership reduces school bus emissions for ISD 196

Project Green Fleet is reducing the pollution emitted by at least 200 metro area school buses this year through a partnership of Minnesota businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations.

Project Green Fleet installed emission-reducing technology on ISD 196 school buses at very little cost to the school district due to funding received from sponsors. These retrofits, which reduce bus pollutants by around 40 percent, made significant gains in pollution reduction as well as public health.

"With the week of Oct. 16 being National School Bus Safety Week, we would like to take this opportunity to recognize the tremendous progress Minnesota school districts are making toward improving the wellbeing of children who ride school buses, as well as reducing overall pollution levels," said Bill Droessler, director of Clean Air Minnesota, which is coordinating Project Green

Fleet.

More than half of Minnesota's air pollution results from mobile sources, including cars, trucks and buses. Diesel-fueled vehicles, including school buses, emit the highest level of unhealthy pollutants which can contribute to heart and lung disease, such as asthma and other problems.

Children are especially susceptible to these health problems because they breathe more air relative to their body weight than adults and ride buses more frequently. Each school day, the average child spends more than an hour on a bus, where pollution levels inside buses can be up to five times higher than outdoor air.

"Project Green Fleet is unique in its scale and that it is based on entirely voluntary partnerships," said David Thornton, assistant commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

In addition to the school districts that voluntarily retrofit their buses, Project Green

Fleet's air quality initiative has garnered the support of a number of organizations. Organizations include Flint Hills Resources, Xcel Energy, Rochester Public Utilities, Minnesota Power, the Mayo Foundation, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, the U.S. EPA, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and Donaldson Company, which makes the pollution-reduction technology to be used in the project.

To celebrate Project Green Fleet's successful first year and to recognize contributing school districts and sponsors, Project Green Fleet hosted an event on Tuesday, Oct. 17 at Glacier Hills Elementary School in Eagan. State officials, environmental experts and school administrators spoke at the event.

For more information about Project Green Fleet, or to become a sponsor, visit www.projectgreenfleet.org or contact Bill Droessler at (612) 334-3388, extension 103.