



Eliminating the Waste in Waste Collection™

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Iowa State University

The Iowa State Facilities, Planning and Management (FP&M) department is helping the university fulfill several missions with just one initiative. As a way to "Keep Iowa State Beautiful," "Live Green," and reduce operating costs in the face of tightening budgets, FP&M has turned to the BigBelly intelligent waste collection system.

ISU installed the first BigBelly solar compactor in the state of Iowa in 2009. The reviews for this innovative waste collection solution were so high that ISU ordered 11 additional solar compactors in 2010 and 30 more in 2011, for a total of 42 campus-wide.



Replacing trash receptacles with a network of BigBelly compactors has saved the university time and money since the compactors need to be emptied just once or twice per week by ISU facilities staff, as opposed to traditional trash receptacles which are emptied once or twice per day. ISU installed the solar compactors in high traffic areas where trash cans had to be checked multiple times a day, such as Central Campus, Parks Library, College of Veterinary Medicine and the transit facility in the Hilton Coliseum parking lot.

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The solar compactors are equipped with the CLEAN wireless monitoring system that notifies FP&M staff when the compactors are ready to be emptied. This saves workers the trouble of constantly checking the bins, increasing productivity. Combining wireless monitoring with compaction has freed up significant worker hours for other key tasks.

"Compared to the trash cans we had before, we've cut our collection costs by 90 percent," said ISU Director of Sustainability Merry Rankin, commending the FP&M department for being so forward-thinking and methodical in its adoption of this new system. The university expects the turnaround to financial gain from the solar compactors to be within one or two years.

Triple bottom line: Environmental, economic and social sustainability

Rankin said the success of the solar compactors demonstrates that sustainability efforts can be simple to implement and highly cost-effective. "True sustainability must be sustainable environmentally, economically, and socially – by saving human resources," Rankin said. "The BigBelly program truly achieves that triple bottom line."

"This is an instance where we can do very important things to promote sustainability in an economically compelling way," said Rankin. "You can do great things in a very short period of time, with immediate, measurable results."

The machines are covered in colorful, informative decal wraps meant to educate people about the technology and the university's "[Live Green](#)" Initiative, the sustainability commitment initiated in 2008 by ISU President Gregory Geoffroy. Rankin would recommend that other BigBelly customers also spend time on messaging and take advantage of this unique platform: "More people know about and are engaged in the 'Live Green' initiative now and the BigBelly system has been an instrumental part of raising awareness," she said.

"There is a lot of buzz around sustainability on campus, and BigBelly has helped create this buzz."