



## Green & Efficient

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Fresh & Easy, Sustainability Excellence Awards Winner in the chain category, has brought a strong emphasis on energy-saving to its small-format stores.

Lighting costs are also reduced by means of multiple skylights at about half of the chain's stores. The skylights are designed to maximize the light while minimizing the heat coming into the store. ([See "Skylights Continue to Mark Fresh & Easy's Décor," SN, Aug. 9, 2010.](#))

A number of energy-saving steps have been taken for refrigerated cases, including triple-plane glass with an anti-fog coating on refrigerator doors, which eliminate the need for door heaters for icing or fogging; night curtains on cases to conserve energy while keeping product at the appropriate temperature when stores are closed; and sliding doors on coffin cases that cut energy usage by 45% compared to open cases.

In addition, for medium- and low-temperature cases, Fresh & Easy stores employ secondary loop refrigeration systems from Kysor/Warren and Hill Phoenix; these use 10% less energy than conventional units, said Munoz.

In terms of impact on the atmosphere, the Rosemead's store's cascade refrigeration system - one of only four installed in U.S. supermarkets - reduces the effect on the ozone layer by about 70% compared to industry standards and has about 50% lower global warming potential than traditional refrigerants.

"We're moving in a different direction to try and use new technology to [produce] less greenhouse gases," said Munoz. To that end, Fresh & Easy also joined the EPA's GreenChill partnership last year, committing to reduce refrigerant emissions; its leak rate last year was "well under 10%," the company said, compared to an industry average of about 25%.

A year ago, Fresh & Easy opened its first store to receive LEED gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The store, in Cathedral City, Calif., was recognized for low energy and water usage, lighting efficiency, and using 90% recycled steel in the building's structure. The chain is also a pilot member of the LEED Volume Certification Program, which will certify multiple LEED stores based on a prototype store passing muster. Fresh & Easy's prototype has not yet

opened, but once it does, “every building opened to that spec” will be LEED certified, said Munoz.

The company's energy initiatives extend to transportation as well. For example, it uses hybrid refrigeration trailers that plug in electrically at the distribution center during loading and unloading instead of using diesel fuel. Its district managers drive a Prius while traveling between stores.

## UV SANITIZER

On the recycling front, 90% of waste from Fresh & Easy stores is diverted from landfills, said Munoz. For example, last year, the chain announced it had reused more than 2 million plastic display trays - which hold product on store shelves - by passing them through an ultra violet light sanitizing machine. The machine is operated by **Resource Management Group**, San Diego, which works at Fresh & Easy's DC to recycle and reuse tons of material collected at stores including cardboard, paper, plastic shrink wrap, pallets, totes, crates and hand baskets.

At stores, recycling is available for plastic bottles, aluminum, plastic bags and glass. And every store has a food bank partner to which edible food that has reached its expiration date is donated. Stores use eco-friendly cleaning products to clean the enamel-coated concrete floors.

The company works with its private label suppliers - who produce most of its food products - to minimize the amount of material used in packaging. “They use as much as they need for the food to be safe,” said Munoz. Packaging is labeled so that shoppers know how to recycle it.

Fresh & Easy's extensive reusable bag program offers four different types of bags, with a new bag design resulting from a contest in August that generated 1,300 submissions. The chain gives away magnets reminding shoppers to bring their bags. Standard plastic bags are made from 50% recycled material and are designed to be larger and sturdier than conventional bags.

“We've always believed the best option is a reusable bag and we're excited to see more and more customers use them,” said Munoz.