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## **Oakwood cuts its engines as part of green partnership**

Oakwood has adopted a policy to limit how long city vehicles sit with their engines idling, hoping it will reduce pollution and save fuel, City Manager Stan Brown said.

Brown is an enthusiastic representative of Oakwood in Hall County's Environmental Management System, which was established in 2010. The countywide system and its program, EnviroShare, is a voluntary network of local governments, school systems, residents, businesses and nonprofit organizations who work together toward common environmental goals. EnviroShare was a waste reduction program in the county before being expanded more than two years ago.

The inspiration for EnviroShare was Bartow County, which was the first in the nation to put such a system in place, said Ashley Bell, former Hall County commissioner. He led the movement to implement the public-private partnership locally. There are 19 members, including the city of Flowery Branch, manufacturer SKF USA Inc., Lanier Career Academy and United Way of Hall County.

"My goal was to create a big table where we could take private-sector ideas and use them in the public sector," Bell said. "Being green means saving green."

Oakwood's new policy on idling is designed to reduce air pollution and use city resources more efficiently. The city has about 30 vehicles, including police cars, garbage trucks and public works department vehicles, said Brown, who is also chairman of EnviroShare's external steering committee.

The new rule includes allowing initial warm-up time after prolonged periods of shutdown, limits idling of the engine and provides exemptions during times of emergency. The rule also allows for some operator discretion. Partner organization Clean Air Campaign also advocates that cities limit vehicle idling.

"To me, it's a no-brainer," Brown said. "It makes good economics."

A couple more ideas that have come out of the environmental partnership include recommending paint recycling receptacles and special fluorescent light bulb recycling events in Hall County. The members, including new partners Brenau University and Fieldale Farms Corp., have been developing goals and objectives in working groups, EnviroShare Coordinator Rick Foote said.

The partners meet quarterly. The steering committee met in January and is scheduled to meet again April 19. The resident advisory subcommittee also met in January and is scheduled to meet March 19.