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Crown Cork & Seal, neighbors agree on pollution pact

■ Plant becomes Minnesota's first to voluntarily sign pollution agreement

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FARIBAULT — Faribault's Crown Cork & Seal made history Wednesday evening when it became the first Minnesota company whose management and labor members voluntarily entered into a pollution prevention agreement with nearby residents and environmentalists.

The Crown Cork & Seal agreement is part of Citizens for a Better Environment's (CBE) Good Neighbor Project. CBE promotes dialogues between communities and companies around the state on environmental topics.

The agreement, signed Wednesday and marked with a gathering of community members and plant officials, comes just one year after Crown Cork & Seal received the Governor's Award for Excellence in honor of its successful effort to reduce harmful emissions from the plant by 50 percent. That five-year goal was reached two years ahead of schedule.

Now, the company has set a new target through the agreement to reduce pollution by an overall figure of 75 percent over six years. Planned methods for achieving that goal include: innovations in technology, reduced use of harmful chemicals at the plant, waste reduction and increased recycling.

Community members, plant leaders and workers were part of a committee which worked for one year to reach Wednesday's agreement.

Doug Cox, plant engineer, said, "When we received the request from community members to set up a Good Neighbor committee a year ago, we weren't sure what we were getting into. It's been a positive involvement for the company."

Minnesota's 1990 Toxic Pollution Prevention Act will require more than 450 manufacturing plants to outline future efforts to reduce pollution. A chemical engineer performed a pollution prevention assessment at Crown Cork & Seal.

Liz Hartman, a Faribault resident active on the committee, said, "The company has done a wonderful job. This shows what can be accomplished when environmentalists inside and outside a facility work together."

Mayor Jeanette Hammond, Faribault City Council member Pat Rice and Steve Anderson, immediate past-president of the Faribault Area Chamber of Commerce, all attended Wednesday's meeting.

Lloyd Heim is chairman of Crown Cork & Seal's environmental response committee.

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