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Two local titans in the office products industry, Pitney Bowes Inc. and **Xerox Corp.**, are sharing some of their patents with the general public. Rather than revealing how to build a postage meter or a color copier, however, the patents might enable someone to remove toxic waste from soil and water more quickly or use less ink in a printer.

The companies are part of Eco-Patent Commons, a global effort to use existing technology to protect the environment.

Other partners in Eco-Patent Commons are IBM Corp., Nokia, Bosch, DuPont, Sony and the Geneva-based World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

Norwalk-based **Xerox** has pledged 11 patents to the venture. Those patents make it possible to trim the process of removing toxic waste from soil and water from years to months.

According to **Xerox**, the traditional way to treat sites where organic solvents have spilled involves first drilling a well to pump out the ground water and treat it, then applying a vacuum to the soil to remove and treat vapors.

Xerox's 2-PHASE Extraction system uses a stronger vacuum that simultaneously removes both the soil vapors and water - in the form of mist. **Xerox** said it can reduce overall remediation times by as much as 80 percent.

"We developed the 2-PHASE technology more than 15 years ago to help us remediate sites more quickly and at less expense," said Patricia Calkins, **Xerox's** vice president of environment, health and safety. "We believe it will be a valuable tool for others, such as the local dry cleaners or gas stations, who need to clean up volatile organic compounds."

"**Xerox** has made a long-term commitment to environmentally responsible operations," she said. "The Eco-Patent Commons gives

us the opportunity to share what we have learned."

Xerox pledges the patents to Eco-Patent Commons, which is a repository of patents and other intellectual property made available to anyone free of charge, **Xerox** spokeswoman Elissa Nesbitt said.

"Essentially, companies retain ownership. They simply pledge not to assert their rights to prevent others from using the patents to provide environmental benefit, she said.

Stamford-based Pitney Bowes, a mailing systems and postage meter company, contributed patents for a product that makes mail scales last longer and protects them from overloads and an ink jet printer that reduces waste ink and extends the life of ink cartridges.

"We saw participation in Eco-Patent Commons as an opportunity to be leaders in promoting the spread of environmentally conscious technologies," said Brian Lemm, senior corporate counsel at Pitney Bowes and a board member of Eco-Patent Commons. "We think it will provide access to technologies that we would not otherwise have access to."

Membership in Eco-Patent Commons has a positive public relations impact, said Mark Nowotarski, president of Markets, Patents & Alliances LLC, a patent consulting firm in Stamford.

"By making these technologies available, they present the image to the public that they are supporting environmental causes," said Nowotarski, a former corporate research and development fellow for Danbury-based Praxair Inc., a producer of industrial gases.

At Praxair, Nowotarski devised 17 patents for environmentally friendly technologies. He said he found a way to take freon out of the computer manufacturing process and invented a method to reduce by half the carbon dioxide emissions in the freezing of food. Nowotarski also worked on ways to clean municipal waste water with ozone instead of chlorine, he said.

Pitney Bowes and **Xerox** are involved in environmentally sound practices. Pitney Bowes Inc. claimed to have saved almost \$3 million in fuel costs over the past two years by cutting down its customer service trips. The company promotes car pools, telecommuting and shortened work weeks among its Fairfield County employees to save gasoline.

At its world headquarters in Stamford, Pitney Bowes also invested several million dollars in renovations that included recycling of construction waste and the use of eco-friendly building materials and energy efficient lighting.

Xerox, the world's largest producer of copiers, is among a rising number of companies that are turning off lights in empty rooms and

cutting back on excess copying and printouts, to save energy.

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