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The Buy Quiet Program

The Buy Quiet Program represents a new kind of volunteer effort to achieve environmentally improved and more energy efficient products and vehicles. It uses the forces of familiar market economics and is organized through creative partnerships between public sector and private sector interests on both the local and national levels.

Buy-Quiet is a cooperative effort involving the National League of Cities, the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, the Environmental Protection Agency and an increasing number of public and private organizations on all levels (national, regional, local). The program works to help purchasing entities at the local level such as cities and private industries, buy quieter, less polluting and more energy efficient products and services through the bid specification process. Quite simply, if a purchasing entity (e.g., a city) chooses to buy a quieter product, it asks for it; and if a private supplier wants the business, and chooses to respond, he enters his bid into the competitive process. In this way, "Markets for quiet" are created, and through this process, quieter products such as garbage trucks, portable air compressors and other products become available to the buyer at little or no extra cost.

Major supplying industries are very responsive to institutional buying entity requests for quiet. The partnership at the local level between local suppliers and local public buyers, is realized through the competitive process based on mutual self interest. The locality in asking for quiet gets a quieter community and progress toward a number of other objectives in the process. The supplier, in turn, by responding, gains entry into an organized market so that he can enhance his presence in competing for orders for his product. Out of this local partnership, a national partnership evolves between government and industry. This partnership is realized when the actions each take in supplying information and guidance to local buyers and suppliers tend toward the growth of an aggregate market force driving product noise levels down.

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Buy Quiet also fosters partnerships at the local level between public organizations and private organizations in their role as purchasers. For example various major local purchasing associations, such as the Chicagoland chapter of the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, are inviting their counterparts in the private sector to meet with them to share their Buy Quiet information and product purchase information. The outcome of this activity will be greater partnership not only as it relates to purchasing but other management functions, such as vehicle fleet management, as well.

Buying Quiet is not a new concept to the National League of Cities (NLC). Three years ago Buy Quiet was started by EPA as a distinct alternative to excessive noise regulations. For years, NLC has advocated and encouraged cities through its National Municipal Policy to use their purchasing power to ensure that vendors supply new equipment or services that incorporate noise reduction features. The market responds to demand naturally rather than artificially through a regulatory process. Thus, communities acting together can leverage the quality of supply because of the magnitude of demand.