

## **Devens Eco group talks fire safety and sustainability for old and new businesses**

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DEVENS -- The Eco-Efficiency Center held a roundtable talk on a recent Friday on fire safety and inspections and new sustainable developments in Devens.

The Eco-Efficiency Center is a nonprofit entity established in 2007. Its primary mission is to work with businesses in Devens and surrounding communities to make better use of their resources through education, networking forums and technical assistance.

"The beauty of the forum is that everyone gets a chance to learn from each other," said Dona Neely, director of the Devens Eco-Efficiency Center.

Devens Fire Department Deputy Chief Tim Kelly explained that every time a new building is built or an old building is modified, inspections are necessary and all commercial buildings are required to have annual fire inspections.

"When we set up a visit to your facility, we first drop off emergency contact forms, which will get picked up the day of the inspection," Kelly said.

Kelly requests copies of each businesses latest fire alarm test and sprinkler test report prior to the inspection. He encouraged businesses to check all permits, including LPG storage, flammable liquid storage, Dumpster storage and tank permits. He explained specific requirements for all fire inspections, noting that a three-foot clearance must be around all electrical panels and fire sprinklers, for example.

After the fire inspection, a copy of the report will be available within 15 days, along with all fire violations and recommendations. Following report receipt, businesses are allowed up to 15 days to send a letter to the DFD outlining a plan of correction for any violations.

Kelly mentioned the CODE RED notification system, which notifies subscribers of any emergencies in the area. This web-based system allows DFD to broadcast an emergency at any time, allowing subscribers to know what is going on instantly. All landlines are automatically entered into the system, but owners of cell phones and emails must subscribe online at [www.coderedweb.com](http://www.coderedweb.com) if they desire notification.

## **Devens Development**

Devens Enterprise Commission environmental planner Neil Angus talked about current and proposed development projects.

Among the finished projects is sustainable housing consisting of eight single-family and 12 multi-family homes that score 100 percent less than average homes on the HERS scale or Home Energy Rating System. A base minimum code is 100 and the sustainable single-family homes range between 8 and 36, while multi-family homes come in at 40. The homes include solar energy and natural light, 12-inch thick insulated walls and triple-pane glass windows.

The Citizens Energy Solar Farm is also finished and hosts three megawatts of ground-mounted solar with over 12,000 panels. Although the project did require clear-cutting a forest, "the trade off was worth it," he said. "The farm has generated close to two-million kilowatt hours in the first six months of operation." For the same amount of energy, it would take 213,529 gallons of gasoline to produce, he said.

Among other new sites -- the Regional Dispatch Center on Barnum Road and New England Studios, which is scheduled to open next month with an area of 126,000 square feet. The studios are discussing doubling the original plan and creating more sound stages.

"We aren't sure who will go in these spaces yet, but a lot of companies that came in say that they need more space," Angus said.

Angus and his team is also working to preserve existing sites in Devens for a more eco-friendly future including re-mapping of the hiking trails and implementing stormwater management sites to filter Mirror Lake and what eventually runs into the Nashua River. All businesses are required to submit a stormwater management operation and maintenance report by Oct. 1.

"All we want is to make sure that you are looking at your systems and that they are maintained," Angus said.

The Eco-Efficiency Center meets on the first Friday of every month in an effort to provide a "helpful and informative networking and community event for local businesses." All meetings are open to the public.

If interested in joining a forum, contact Dona Neely at [donaneely@ecostardevens.com](mailto:donaneely@ecostardevens.com) or 978-772-831 ext. 3304.

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