

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Recognized for Commercializing Technology

The Federal Laboratory Consortium has honored Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) researchers once again for their efforts in moving technologies out of the laboratory and into the marketplace.

Each year, the Consortium gives up to 30 "excellence in technology transfer" awards to government laboratory teams that successfully move their developments into the private sector. PNNL leads all federal labs in this respect, with 45 awards since 1984, according to PNNL spokesperson Susan Bauer. A formal award ceremony honoring this year's technology transfer winners will be held May 8-12 in Charleston, S.C.

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, located in Richland, Wash., is one of the U.S. Department of Energy's nine multi-program national laboratories. It conducts research in the fields of environment, energy, health sciences, and national security. PNNL has been operated for the DOE since 1965 by Battelle, based in Columbus, Ohio.

One of the technologies honored this year is the Plasma Enhanced Melter (PEM), which may help to enhance recycling efforts because it can accept many kinds of waste simultaneously. Commercialization of the technology has created a new business opportunity for Integrated Environmental Technologies in Richland, Wash. The PEM, which combines a plasma arc and glass melter, provides an "attractive alternative for municipal waste treatment as well as cleanup of government waste sites," according to a PNNL release.

Another technology may help develop lightweight, fuel-efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles by providing a cost-effective way to form aluminum sheet materials. The technology, a superplastic forming process for aluminum alloys, was transferred to General Motors Corporation, MARC Analysis, and Kaiser Aluminum.

Parallel processing software was the third PNNL technology honored this year. The Lab's Molecular Science Software Suite is said to be the first general-purpose software that provides chemists with access to high-performance, massively parallel computers for a wide range of applications. The software is used by more than 37 universities and supercomputing centers, 14 national laboratories or federal agencies, and 15 industries, says Bauer. The software may be used to solve complex environmental problems, search for new pharmaceuticals, and improve agriculture productivity, among other applications.

Business inquiries about the award-winning technologies may be directed to 1-888-375-PNNL or inquire@pnl.gov.