



## **ECO-PATENT COMMONS DATABASE PROVIDES SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS SOLUTIONS FOR FREE**

**The Eco-Patent Commons was launched in January 2008 by IBM, Nokia, Pitney Bowes and Sony in partnership with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) based in Geneva, Switzerland.**

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The WBCSD brings together some 200 companies from over 30 countries and 20 industrial sectors in a shared commitment to sustainable development through economic growth, ecological balance and social progress.

The premise of the Eco-Patent Commons is to allow environmental protection innovations and solutions to be easily shared so that anyone that wants to bring environmental benefits to market or to their own operations can use these patents. It was also designed to promote cooperation, collaboration and new innovation among businesses that are developing environmental solutions.

The Commons database contains over one hundred eco-friendly patents from eleven companies; the original founding members plus Bosch, Dow, DuPont, Fuji-Xerox, Ricoh, Taisei and Xerox. Based on the concepts of open source software, the patents have all been pledged to the public domain.

The Eco-patent commons has been the first organized effort to make patents available, without royalty, to help enable the world community to reduce waste, pollution, global warming and energy demands. Participating companies and universities choose the patents that they want to pledge, so are able to retain those that are essential sources of income.

The Commons is open to the public and displayed in a searchable database. All of the patents provide direct or indirect environmental benefits such as energy conservation or efficiency, pollution prevention (source reduction, waste reduction), use of environmentally preferable materials or substances, materials reduction and increased recyclability.

The main difference between dedicating patents to the Commons versus directly to the public is that the Commons allows the pledger to terminate the patent to those who assert patents against the pledger. The Commons also allows a pledger to assert patents, outside the field of the Commons, against another pledger without losing rights inside the Commons.

For those looking to develop environmental solutions, the database provides free and easy access to patents that can be leveraged to improve the environmental aspects of their

operations or innovations. It also provides those facing an environmental challenge to connect with those that have already found successful solutions.

Recent patents added to the Commons include a technology developed by Dow to enable more efficient production of olefins - the basic building blocks for many materials used in packaging, electronics, adhesives, and durable goods - by reducing energy and material consumption in the process. These patents help make olefin production more efficient through increased catalyst lifetimes, and less increase in pressure drop over time in the reactor, which reduces the frequency of catalyst replacement. Also recently added is a wastewater treatment method developed by Fuji Xerox.

In addition to Xerox Corporation's eleven pledged patents that cover a process that cuts the time it takes to remove toxic waste from soil and water from years to months, the company has also pledged a patent that covers technology that makes magnetic refrigeration less harmful to the environment.

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