

FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



will enable it to continue to provide skills training for DVOPs and LVERs and other front-line staff directly providing services to veterans.

—US DEPT. OF LABOR
10/08/96

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

DOLLARS DEDICATED TO ENERGY EFFICIENCY, CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

■(WASHINGTON) More than \$15 million was awarded by the Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Science Foundation in Environmental Technology Partnership (ETP) grants to universities, private industry, and DOE laboratories last week. The \$15.4 million is to conduct research leading to environmentally sound and energy efficient industrial processes.

Fifty awards for Fiscal 1996 will probe the edges of science in a number of ways, including:

- Research conducted by Oak Ridge National Laboratory, TN, will increase the productivity of forests by optimizing nutrient and water content of soils, focusing on coastal plain soils of the southeast and infertile soils in the northeast.

- Los Alamos National Laboratory, NM, will research operations in blast furnace plants to lower emissions by reducing gas consumption. Industry carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions could be cut by 564,500 tons per year.

- Ohio State University will research the influence of casting thickness and surface coating on the mechanical properties of die cast magnesium alloys, a potential project for energy conservation by improving the selection and usage of die-cast magnesium-based alloys for structural applications, such as automobiles.

Designing cleaner technologies is at the

heart of research and development efforts to shift from waste management and remediation to pollution prevention over the next five to 10 years.

The list of awards by institution and project title is available from DOE's Public Inquiries Branch, Washington, DC 20585, phone: 202/586-5575.

—US DEPT. OF ENERGY
10/07/96

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

TELEMEDICINE PROJECTS ADVANCED

■(WASHINGTON) Saying that "telemedicine offers us some of our best and most cost-effective opportunities for improving quality and access to health care," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala on Monday announced a range of new activities to support telemedicine development. The new actions include:

- Funding for 19 telemedicine projects, affecting rural, inner-city and suburban areas, totaling \$42 million

- A demonstration project enabling Medicare to pay for health care services delivered via telemedicine

Telemedicine involves health care applications of telecommunications technologies, including television and the Internet. This can include providing medical care to patients at a distance: for example the use of live video to examine patients in remote locations or cable TV to provide in-home service for homebound patients. It also includes electronic transmission of patient records and X-rays; expert consultations; and education for health professionals, including those in rural and medically underserved communities.

The 19 multi-year telemedicine projects, located in 13 states and the District of Columbia, are funded by the National Library of Medicine, a part of HHS' National Institutes of Health.

In addition, Secretary Shalala announced that HHS' Health Care Financing Administration is initiating a three-year experiment in which Medicare will pay for telemedicine services at 57 Medicare-certified facilities. The demonstration focuses on medical consultations, in which a primary care provider with a Medicare patient at a remote site consults with a medical specialist located at a

medical center facility. The demonstration concentrates on rural areas where Medicare patients may not have access to nearby medical specialists.

"We want to use telemedicine to make high quality, specialist care more accessible at lower cost," Secretary Shalala said. "As the nation's largest health insurer, Medicare can help pave the way toward efficient use of these new technologies."

Telemedicine may reduce some transfers of patients from smaller health facilities to medical centers. Currently, Medicare and many other third-party insurers only cover "face to face" medical encounters.

—US DEPT. OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
10/08/96

USDA REENGINEERING TEAM WINS TECHNOLOGY AWARD

■(WASHINGTON) Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman on Monday announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's government purchase card reengineering and implementation team received an award from the Industry Advisory Council for Government Information Technology Services at the group's annual conference in Richmond, Virginia.

Government purchase cards are commercial credit cards used to purchase a wide range of goods and services. Using a state-of-the-art on-line account reconciliation process developed by USDA's National Finance Center, the new purchase card management system will eliminate the processing of monthly paper statements and invoices for nearly 11,000 current cardholders, allow one payment for USDA, and provide comprehensive management information for program oversight.

Once implemented department-wide, USDA's new purchase card processes and systems are expected to achieve up to \$46 million in administrative efficiencies and cost avoidances by the year 2000. In addition, the team worked with the General Services Administration to allow card holders to write checks for government purchases against the purchase card accounts, a first in the government. This feature is especially useful for employees, such as fire fighters, who are working in remote areas where establishments may not take credit cards.

—US DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
10/08/96

"Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison . . . the only house in a slave State in which a free man can abide with honor."

Henry David Thoreau
'Civil Disobedience'
1849