

Energy looks to reduce fleet by 35 percent by October 2013

By **ANDY MEDICI**

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Six years ago, Steven Chu came to the conclusion that the Energy Department's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California, which he directed at the time, had too many cars.

That launched a continuous effort at the lab to pare down the fleet. By 2010, the lab downsized its fleet of vehicles by more than a third — from 261 cars and trucks in 2005 to 166, said Jim Dahlgard, the lab's senior business manager of facilities management. To accomplish that, lab personnel increased their sharing of vehicles and terminated leases of under-used cars, Dahlgard said. Low-speed electric vehicles,

not included in the fleet total, were also added to provide transportation around the lab campus.

It's a feat Chu — now Energy Department secretary — hopes to replicate across the department: a 35 percent reduction in fleet size by October 2013 from a 2005 baseline.

The Energy Department leased or owned 14,591 cars and trucks in fiscal 2005, according to General Services Administration data. That means Chu's aim is for a fleet under 9,500.

The cuts will save the Energy Department \$20 million a year through the end of 2013 in leasing, maintenance and fuel costs, according to spokeswoman Jen Stutsman.

Energy will cut both its owned fleet and its leases through GSA,

but component agencies will have flexibility to set their own specific plans, she said.

"The secretary made clear that these goals should be met without sacrificing either critical mission elements or our commitment to operating in a safe, secure and environmentally sound manner," Stutsman said.

Dahlgard said while some at the Berkeley lab worried that having fewer cars would hurt productivity, employees learned they could make do without.

"Even though we have reduced our fleet, we are no less efficient than before," Dahlgard said.

There was some resistance initially to the effort to shrink the lab's fleet, Dahlgard said. Fleet



CHRIS MADDALONI/STAFF

Energy Secretary Steven Chu says the agency is working to make its fleet more efficient and would rely more on alternative-fuel vehicles.

managers weighed the need for cars assigned to individuals and required employees to sign up for cars as needed.

"Government assets cannot just sit idle; they must be used, and not just for someone's personal convenience," he said.

The laboratory recently installed GPS devices that download trip data and provide detailed information about fleet use. That could lead to even more reductions in the fleet, Dahlgard said.

Chu said May 24 that the Energy Department is also working to make its fleet more efficient and would use more alternative-fuel vehicles.

President Obama the same day ordered agencies to cut fuel use by buying more alternative-fuel vehicles and, in some cases, reducing the size of their fleets.

Obama issued the memo as GSA announced plans to spend \$4.3 million to purchase 116 electric vehicles. GSA will rent the cars to 20 federal agencies in five cities across the country.

The new electric cars will save a total of \$116,000 annually in fuel costs, according to GSA administrator Martha Johnson.

The federal fleet has more than 662,000 cars, according to GSA. About 10,759 are hybrid vehicles, while 158,300 run on a mixture of gasoline and ethanol. □

CIA official calls for changes in how secrets are managed

By **SEAN REILLY**

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One of the most resonant voices for changing how the government keeps secrets is coming from within.

Harry Cooper Jr., chief of classification

protecting classified records.

Cooper's call for wholesale change is "noteworthy," said Steven Aftergood, a secrecy expert at the Federation of American Scientists.

"Everyone has complained about overclassification and mismanagement of information," Aftergood said. "Not everybody has said throw the whole thing out and start over."

But Mike German, a former FBI agent now involved in policy work at the American Civil Liberties Union, questioned whether Cooper's approach is realistic.

The biggest problems now are overclassification and a lack of accountability, German said. "I'm not sure that what he suggests would address the problem," he said.

From 2000 to last year, the volume of classified material skyrocketed sevenfold, according to yearly reports from the Informa-

Government looks to website to prevent improper payments

By **SEAN REILLY**

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The Obama administration is seeking \$10 million to expand a website that will alert agencies to people, organizations and contractors who should not be getting federal funds.

The site, known as VerifyPayment.gov, meshes several databases to check that payments aren't going to people who are dead, in federal prison or barred from doing business with the government. The project, already tested at the Veterans Affairs Department, is slated to go governmentwide next year, said Danny Werfel, controller for

ceive audit data within the next month or so.

The proposed expansion of the VerifyPayment.gov website is an attempt to build on the work of the Recovery, Accountability and Transparency (RAT) Board, an oversight agency created in 2009 to keep watch on hundreds of billions of dollars in economic stimulus spending. Relatively few instances of misuse of that money have surfaced. That accomplishment is attributed in part to the board's use of "forensic" tools to pre-empt waste and abuse instead of resorting to traditional "pay and chase" methods.

Although the RAT Board is scheduled to dissolve in 2013, leaders are striving to ensure that its approach lives on. The board is allowing