



National Environment & Planning Agency

10 & 11 Caledonia Avenue, Kingston 5, Jamaica W.I. Tel: (876) 754-7540 Fax: (876) 754-7595-6, toll free help-line: 1-888-991-5005
Website: <http://www.nepa.gov.jm>

Media Release

Attention: All News Editors

KINGSTON, Jamaica

(5 September 2014):

JAMAICA'S LONE FEMALE LEADING A GLOBAL FIGHT

Japan, Switzerland, Kenya, Suriname, Thailand, India, Grenada and France - just a few of the countries this jetsetter has traveled. But contrary to what many may initially think, these sojourns are not being made to bask in the cultural offerings, tourist attractions, or the shopping experiences these countries are known for; they are all part of the work of a woman leading Jamaica's charge in a global environmental issue- Ozone Layer Protection.

As National Ozone Officer, Nicol Walker, is head of the National Ozone Unit which is housed at the National Environment and Planning Agency. She is THE mover and shaker ensuring Jamaica along with 197 other countries reduces its production, importation and use of substances that destroy the ozone layer.

“It's a huge responsibility because I am responsible for ensuring Jamaica meets its obligations under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, so the buck really stops with me. While Jamaica does not produce ozone depleting substances (ODS), we have agreed to phase out the amounts we import. By 2040, all ODS should be eliminated.”



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Jamaica has helped to make the Montreal Protocol one of the most successful environmental agreements ever signed. The country has also been recognized and received awards for our efforts.

“We (Jamaica) have a lot to be proud of. Through the work of the Unit, the country was successful in phasing out a dangerous ODS in 2006. Chloroflourocarbons (CFCs) were.... Jamaica was able to completely phase out its importation four years ahead of the Montreal Protocol’s schedule which was January 1 2010. The country was also able to phase out Halons in 2002, and two other ODS in 2007.”

In fact, Jamaica has been so successful in achieving its targets that the nation received the ‘Montreal Protocol Exemplary Project Recognition’ Award in 2007.

The Ozone Head admits that along with the good, there are challenges which she has had to overcome. One such challenge is the resistance she sometimes experiences from males who question her competence due to her gender.

“Sometimes when a male calls, I can detect in their tone they are thinking ‘ok, this female is not gonna give me the answer I want.’ Someone has actually asked me if there is someone else they can speak to. But once they realize that I have the information, then it usually stops them in their tracks and they become more receptive.”



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The Ozone Unit manages projects and takes part in a number of activities geared towards protecting the ozone layer. These activities include training industry professionals on alternatives to ODS, how to identify, store, and dispose them. The Unit also helps companies retrofit their machinery to comply with ozone friendly practices.

Walker, who is a graduate of the University of the West Indies had no plans to be in the Ozone Unit. With an Undergraduate degree in Zoology and Botany, and a Postgraduate degree in Zoology, she explains how she came to be involved in her current post.

“I first ended up at NEPA in 2003 managing a project on persistent organic pollutants. I transitioned into the Ozone Unit in 2005 when the previous ozone officer was leaving. I had no knowledge on the Ozone Layer protection at the time; zero, nada, zilch. Everything I learnt I learnt on the job. It was a little overwhelming but we had a large team of people who helped to get me up to speed.”

Now, being more than proficient in the issues, this one-woman show who only has one project assistant, has written remarks for Government Ministers, the Agency’s CEO, conducted media interviews, co-chaired international meetings, and made presentations to the island’s tertiary institutions and other groups.

“We really have contributed a lot to ozone layer protection, even though there is still a far way to go. It’s always a high when targets are achieved on time and under budget. It may not sound like a lot, but it makes a world of a difference. On September 16, the world will celebrate



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International Ozone Day and as the United Nations' theme says '*ozone layer protection: the mission goes on.*'"

Her message for the nation.

“Play your part, and by that I mean, be open to alternatives to ODS. Let us not be stuck in the old way of doing things. For consumers, protect yourself from sun exposure – wear your glasses, sunscreen, hats, use your umbrellas, and wear long sleeved shirts and pants to protect your skin if you are going to be in the sun for long periods of time.”

The Ozone Unit Head admits that along with the good, there are challenges which she has had to overcome. One such challenge is the resistance she sometimes experiences from males who question her competence due to her gender.

“Sometimes when a male calls, I can detect in their tone they are thinking ‘ok, this female is not gonna give me the answer I want.’ Someone has actually asked me if there is someone else they can speak to. But once they realize that I have the information, then it usually stops them in their tracks and they become more receptive.”

So after a long week, how does she unwind?

“I love to cook – I must admit I am not very good at cooking Jamaican meals quite honestly, but gourmet dishes are my specialty. Anything recipe that calls for out-of-the-ordinary ingredients, I



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love making that. I'm also a movie-person, especially romantic comedies. I also love to watch performances, so I will go out and see the National Dance Theatre Company and other groups.”

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