



# ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

# News Release

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
June 22, 2006

**MEDIA CONTACT:**  
Dennis Williams, Public Information Officer  
Phone: (858) 573-1241 | Cell: (858) 518-7774

## **MAYOR SANDERS HONORS CITY SANITATION DRIVER AS NATIONAL “DRIVER OF THE YEAR”**

### ***City Wins Driver of Year Award a Record Four Times***

**SAN DIEGO, CA**—San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders got a lesson today about operating a refuse collection truck from America’s best sanitation driver. Sanders learned what it takes to pick-up, lift and empty an automated refuse container from Junius Hawkins, a veteran driver with San Diego’s Environmental Services Department.

Hawkins was chosen the 2006 National “Driver of the Year” by the Environmental Industry Associations, a Washington D.C. based trade association focused on recognizing and honoring waste industry drivers who are committed to safety, quality and service. Hawkins is the fourth San Diego driver selected for the honor in the past seven years that the City has participated in the competition.

Sanders and Hawkins worked as a team to demonstrate the skills it takes to serve the 318,000 residences receiving refuse collection and the 276,000 homes served by the City’s curbside recycling service. Their demonstration of teamwork occurred at a media conference honoring Hawkins and the Environmental Services Department for their outstanding safety and customer satisfaction records.

After arriving with Hawkins in a 28-ton refuse packer, Mayor Sanders took the controls to empty a refuse container under Hawkins’ watchful eye. Sanders completed his assignment with an expert hand having learned his task from America’s best.

Each year, the Environmental Services Department (ESD) nominates two drivers to the EIA competition committee. The committee selects the Driver of the Year by judging nominees’ City safety records along with a review of each driver’s official state driving record for any violations and preventable accidents.

**(MORE)**

***America's Best Sanitation Drivers, add 2***  
***June 22, 2006***

Under EIA rules, winners need not be accident free, or without tickets, but must have the best driving record among all drivers in North America that year. The competition also includes Canadian sanitation drivers.

"Mr. Hawkins has been driving trucks for 30 years and has a near-perfect driving record," said Mayor Sanders at the press conference held at the ESD's Operations Center, where the City's trash and recycling packers are parked and serviced.

Hawkins has driven every type of trash truck from manually-loaded rear loaders, to side loaders, and the newest automated trucks. "Today, I drive a garbage truck that runs on natural gas, which still has the same power as the old trucks, but keeps the air cleaner, and I feel real good about that," said Hawkins. "I like training some of the other drivers and keeping my truck clean and in good condition. When I'm not working, I sing in my church choir and sometimes I go bowling and fishing."

Elmer L. Heap, Jr., Director of the City's Environmental Services Department, said "City sanitation drivers have provided excellent service to San Diegans since 1919. They continue to work in the highest tradition of the City while maintaining our core value of service to the community. All our drivers contribute to the department's well-deserved reputation for safe driving and our top rating in customer satisfaction."

"Having four winners coming from San Diego is extraordinary," said Heap. "No other city or private-sector waste company in the EIA competition has produced more than two Drivers of the Year winners"

Heap noted that the sanitation driver job is the nation's fifth most hazardous occupation, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Junius is a shining example of the commitment to excellence and safety demonstrated each day by the City's sanitation drivers," said Mayor Sanders, who also recognized three former City Driver of the Year award winners, Enrique Rojas (2002 Driver of the Year), Michael Maloney (2000 Driver of the Year) and Johnny Rushing, the City's first EIA winner in 1999, who retired from City service five years ago.

The City of San Diego Environmental Services Department is charged with refuse collection and disposal, recycling and environmentally-sound landfill management to meet the City's long-term disposal needs. For more information on Environmental Services, visit [www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/](http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/). For facts on the Environmental Industry Associations, go to [www.envasns.org/](http://www.envasns.org/).