

HEADlines

Conigliaro expands its mattress recycling program

by Mike McNulty

Conigliaro Inds. has significantly expanded its recycling operation by launching the first commercial plant in the U.S. that shreds and recycles mattresses, including polyurethane foam parts.

The unit is part of a planned two-prong growth program for the New England company, based in Framingham, Mass. Conigliaro, which recycles rubber and urethane, also is branching out as a product developer and manufacturer in the U.S. It recently began adding to its sales staff to build a broader base in the military, landscaping and contracting goods of its business.

The company has completed construction of a 2,500-square-foot mattress shredding facility located next to its 90,000-square-foot plant on a seven acre parcel in Framingham to mark its full-fledged entry into mattress recycling, according to President Gregory Conigliaro.

In addition, the company earmarked another approximately 5,000-square-feet of its main factory and utilizes its 30 docks for the operation.

Conigliaro Inds. also purchased a line of shredding equipment, added six workers and increased its service staff as part of the project, he said.

While he did not give the cost of the addition, Conigliaro noted the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection awarded the company a \$50,000 grant toward construction of the plant. The company contributed the remaining amount.

About 75% of Conigliaro Inds. business consists of recycling 150

materials for about 550 companies, institutions and municipalities in New England, New York and New Jersey.

Because landfill space in Massachusetts is at a premium, the

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company picked a good time to launch the first commercial recycling business in the U.S., according to Don Schumer, chairman of the Alliance for Polyurethane Industry’s Polyurethane Recycle and Recovery Council.

The organization is made up of polyurethane goods manufacturers, along with producers and distributors of chemicals and equipment used to make polyurethane.

“The recycling plant will support the long-term sustainability of the polyurethanes industry,” he said.

In 1990, Massachusetts had 225 operating landfills and today only 22 remain, Conigliaro said. Because of that, the state has put in place several initiatives to address the waste issue.

“Massachusetts has some very aggressive recycling goals,” he said. “Right now the state has a 36% to 38% recycling rate. By 2010, they want to have a 70% recycling rate. The possibility of banning items such as mattresses and box springs from

landfills is very real.”

About 150,000 mattresses are thrown out each year in Massachusetts, he said. “We referenced that figure in designing our equipment. Right now, we can recycle mattresses at the rate of one each minute, or 140,000 in a year. We’re confident that this plant will play a key role in helping the state meet its recycling goals.”

Conigliaro Inds. which was formed as a small recycling in 1990, already has begun to shred mattresses at the site, where the contents - polyurethane foam, wood, cotton and steel - are collected and sold into resale markets.

The mattress recycling operation - planned and developed by Tony Conigliaro, the company’s vice president of engineering, and Greg’s father - uses two processes.

Mattresses from schools, prisons and hospitals are put through the shredder, which separates the polyurethane foam from the springs and wood frame, and bales the foam. That allows the company to recycle about 60% of each mattress, Conigliaro said.

The second process is used for brand-name consumer mattresses.

Workers fillet each side of a mattress on a large iron plate and then run it through the shredder. More than 90% of the materials in each mattress is then recycled.

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