

Conigliaro adds plant, mattress operation

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Gregory Conigliaro (left) and Tony Conigliaro have expanded Conigliaro Industries Inc. by adding a mattress recycling plant.

FRAMINGHAM, Mass.--Conigliaro Industries Inc. 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. The firm, 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 end of its business.

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

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

Conigliaro Industries 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 firm contributed the remaining amount.

It took about six months for Conigliaro Industries to bring in equipment and a much shorter period to construct the building, primarily because it partially used its own Plas-Crete blocks, a product line that will be a focal point of its expansion efforts in 2003.

About 75 percent of Conigliaro Industries' business consists of recycling 150 different 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 company picked a good time to launch the first commercial mattress recycling business in the U.S., according to Don Schomer, 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 urethane.

"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.

recycling goals," he said. "Right now the state has a 36-38 percent recycling rate. By 2010, they want to have a 70-percent 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 Industries, which was formed as a small recycler 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.

Low-quality units--primarily from schools, prisons and hospitals--are put through a shredder, which separates the polyurethane foam from the springs and wood frame, and bales the foam. That allows the company to recycle about 60 percent of each mattress, Conigliaro said.

The second process is used for brand-name mattresses.

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



Conigliaro Industries, Inc. puts low-quality mattresses through a shredder (above), which separates the polyurethane foam from other materials. Below, brand name mattresses usually are filleted on each side and then run through the shredder, allowing the company to recycle a higher portion of material.



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