

Mattresses and Rebuilders/Refurbishers

Why destroying and recycling mattresses, boxsprings and furniture makes more sense than rebuilding/refurbishing!

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INTRODUCTION:

Conigliaro Industries recently built a Mattress Shredding and Recycling Plant at our Framingham, Massachusetts Facility. While Rebuilders/Refurbishers receive thousands of mattresses each year, there are many reasons to destroy and recycle mattresses, boxsprings and furniture, rather than rebuild them.

THE CASE FOR DESTRUCTION AND RECYCLING:

- 1) Lost Revenue – every time a mattress or boxspring is sent to a rebuilder/refurbisher, it hurts mattress manufacturers and retailers. While many rebuilders/refurbishers claim to export their final product, in reality most are sold locally at a reduced price. As such, the rebuilt mattresses and boxsprings compete directly against the lower end units manufactured by most mattress manufacturing companies and sold by retailers in the United States.
- 2) Sanitation and Quality Concerns – while some rebuilders/refurbishers operate their business according to local and state public health regulations, many more do not. In fact, unless properly dismantled, sanitized and rebuilt with new felt, foam and fabric, rebuilt mattresses are considered unsafe. In many cases, “rebuilders/refurbishers” simply cover a used mattress or boxspring with a new fabric layer, without replacing or sanitizing any of the metal, felt, foam and fabric layers. Often times the original labeling is removed from the covered layer and restitched on the new cover to make the unit appear new and from the original manufacturer or retailer.
- 3) Product Stewardship Regulations – many states, including Massachusetts, have enacted new Product Stewardship Regulations as part of their solid waste and recycling master plans.

The Massachusetts Beyond 2000 Solid Waste Master Plan specifically addresses Product Stewardship as follows: “One major way we will meet the challenge before us is by launching a new Product Stewardship Initiative with manufacturers to encourage and, in some cases, require them to share in the responsibility for

managing the products they produce. Product Stewardship refers to the concept that all parties responsible for the design, production, sale, and use of a product assume responsibility for the full environmental impacts of the product throughout its life cycle.¹

A key tenet of Product Stewardship is that manufacturers in particular should take greater responsibility for reducing product impacts. By placing greater responsibility for the end costs of products on manufacturers, product stewardship gives manufacturers strong economic incentives to change how they design and manufacture products, making them less toxic and more recyclable, and giving consumers more choice by internalizing the costs of consumer products.

Product Stewardship also addresses the question of who should pay the cost of waste management, including recycling, disposal, and removing toxics from the waste stream. Currently, these costs are being borne almost entirely by local governments, who have looked to state agencies for financial assistance. State agencies are now looking to product manufacturers to become part of the solution by helping to pay the costs created by the proliferation of waste that local governments must manage.

In addition, EOEA and the University of Massachusetts are jointly supporting the creation of a new national Product Stewardship Institute based at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. This national Institute will assist Massachusetts and other states across the country in promoting environmentally sound product management and design, and support negotiations with industry to reach cooperative agreements to reduce the health and environmental impacts from consumer product manufacture, use, storage, and disposal. At times when legislation is required to foster the goals of product stewardship, the Institute will assist state agencies and legislative bodies on developing legislation.

The next steps of EOEA's Product Stewardship Initiative include developing a Massachusetts Product Stewardship Policy; continuing work on Product Stewardship Action Plans for priority products, developing a research agenda, and supporting regional and national product stewardship initiatives through the national Product Stewardship Institute. As part of these efforts, EOEA will evaluate industry willingness to enter into and follow through on agreements, and will consider additional agency efforts, including regulatory requirements, if significant progress is not shown by industry."

- 4) Liability – Similar to Original Equipment Manufacturers, "OEM's", in the electronics industry, with the advent of Product Stewardship regulations, mattress manufacturers and retailers face the possibility of future liability. This future liability is possible due to the misuse or misrepresentation of rebuilt mattresses and boxsprings as new or only slightly used and as effective as new items. Most rebuilt units are still labeled

¹ Solid Waste Policy Report, Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance, January 2000, p. 45.

with original tags. In fact, OEM liability does not end at the point of sale, but may continue for years. While the rebuilder/refurbisher market for used bedding and furniture is attractive economically in the short run, the possibility of future liability more than eliminates the short term economic advantage of manufacturers and retailers using rebuilders/refurbishers to dispose of used bedding.

While this potential future liability may be mitigated when rebuilt/refurbished mattresses and boxsprings are exported, it is in no way eliminated.

- 5) Industry Support – As the pitfalls associated with rebuilding/refurbishing of used bedding and furniture become apparent, manufacturers, retailers and industry trade groups are taking notice. Their willingness to continue in the same old fashion, using unreliable and circumspect rebuilders/refurbishers is waning. The move is on to send used bedding to a facility where complete and total destruction and recycling can be assured.

CONCLUSION:

Conigliaro Industries offers manufacturers and retailers of mattresses, boxsprings and furniture a permanent solution to the issues discussed in this publication.

Conigliaro Industries is the only commercial used mattress, boxspring and furniture destruction and recycling facility in the United States. We guarantee complete destruction of each unit and the recycling of the constituent parts. Our recycling rates per unit range from 60% (low grade unit) to 100% (high grade unit.)

Much has been written about our facility and the very real benefits of sending used bedding and furniture to our facility for final destruction and recycling rather than to rebuilders/refurbishers.

The following press release was recently sent over the wire by the [Polyurethane Recycle and Recovery Council \(PURRC\)](#)

In addition, a recent article about our program for used bedding and furniture was featured in [Waste News, on October 28, 2002, page 11.](#)

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