

# Mill Product News

## SMART Papers plans to be carbon neutral by late 2009



Seems these days every manufacturer is claiming to be green, but SMART Papers, the oldest operating paper mill in the United States, is a company that is putting its money where its mouth is. The Hamilton, Ohio based papermaker recently broke ground on a new \$30 million high-efficiency energy co-generation facility that will make them 100 percent carbon neutral by late 2009.

The company, which is currently powered by coal, will make the switch to biomass using two steam turbines that they are installing, says Doug Gruber, senior vice-president of sales and marketing for the company. The steam turbines will be powered by renewable non-fossil fuel, using non-harvested wood waste that will be turned into pellets to drive the turbines. The wood waste used in the turbines will be diverted from Ohio landfills and not from trees that have been harvested in any way, says Gruber. “The state of Ohio has in the neighborhood of 300,000 tons of wood waste from trees that have been knocked down from storms, fallen power lines or are by-products of other mills,” he says. “There are several thousand tons of that waste that go into landfills and are not used.”



Even though it was not the most marketable plan, SMART Papers chose to forgo offsetting the CO2 from their coal powered plant through the purchase of carbon credits because they were pursuing the idea of changing their whole production facility and going carbon-free, says Tom Kleimeyer, director of marketing at the company. The reaction has been great he says, with industry insiders remarking at the fact that they Smart Papers is actually doing something to make a difference in their carbon footprint. “That has been our strategy, to say okay, we are really doing something different,” he says. “We are not just buying credits.”

The plan to install the steam turbines and go carbon neutral has been something they have been thinking about for a long time, says Gruber. “It almost seemed like a natural progression to us because we have always been a leader.”

“Quite frankly” says Kleimeyer, SMART Papers has made environmentally friendly steps into their business model because it’s important to their customers. They created their first recycled paper products 30 years ago and this has now expanded to all of their product lines, with a number of the grades being produced with almost 100 percent post-consumer waste. “Other people in other mills do things like this,” he says. “But it is something that we have been doing here for quite a long time.”

This latest green step by Smart Papers to make their plant carbon-neutral is one that has two positive angles, says Gruber. "First we are taking wood out of landfills, which in and of itself would be a positive, but then we are also not taking fossil fuels to drive our production process, which means we aren't adding to greenhouse gases."

The green message might not be the only deciding factor when clients are deciding what choosing which company to work with, but Kleimeyer says it is a differentiating one. "Buyers and users are becoming more sophisticated and they're demanding that the products they see have to look good, print well and perform well. But they also need to be made in an environmentally friendly way."

Though not new to environmental initiatives, Gruber says they the company still has to inform their customers about the steps they are taking to go carbon free. "Some customers are a little bit more interested in being proactive and gathering that information but ultimately this is our message and our story to tell. Our sales group, our marketing effort, our public relations effort are doing what we can to drive this message into marketplace."

While they can't make a direct link between things like a recent National Public Radio interview announcing their carbon-free plan and increased sales, Gruber says that there has been a positive reaction from the market to their the company's environmental initiatives. With a laugh, he says that although the carbon neutral plan has yet to be fully launched, they wouldn't be doing it if they weren't expecting it to be warmly received. "It is a huge investment for us," he says. "So we're hoping it will have a positive response from the market."