

## Conigliaro adds plant, mattress operation

By Mike McNulty

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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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## Recycler making major push into product arena

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FRAMINGHAM, Mass.--Diversified recycler and product maker Conigliaro Industries Inc. has become an expert at utilizing its resources.

The 12-year-old company recycles all types of rubber, urethane, plastic, paper, metal, glass and wood, and for the last 10 years has used some of them to establish a line of products while continuing to build its recycling business. The firm has begun to expand and push that line in earnest and will make its first major thrust into the recycled product market in 2003, according to President Gregory Conigliaro. He said the firm hired three people to help pull in new business.

Conigliaro labeled his company as "a hauling, processing, commodity house and manufacturer." And while the firm's recycling operation accounts for about 75 percent of sales, the president's goal is to build Conigliaro Industries' manufacturing and product base to at least half the overall business as the recycling operation continues to expand.

Conigliaro Industries currently produces used foam insulation; industrial grade hole patch, called Boston's Best Patch, made of recycled materials that usually include rubber and/or urethane; Tumbled Glass Aggregate, recycled pure glass that's turned into, among other things, landscape mulch; PolyCorn, loose-fill packaging, made from recycled foam; mulch, manufactured from recycled wooden pallets and crates; and Plas-Crete blocks, made from mixed plastic aggregate, including rubber, urethane, cement, sand and water.

"We're primarily a New England company, but we ship nationwide," Conigliaro said. For instance, it recycles insulation material--foam board sheets of roofing insulation, some of which is elastomer-based--and turns it into usable foam and ships it to companies across the U.S. The firm annually processes about 250 loads of insulation, with each load consisting of 120 cubic yards.

Spurred by inroads made during the last several months, the firm will place greater focus on Plas-Crete blocks for the military and other market segments, Conigliaro said. Each block requires about 250 pounds of material.



Plas-Crete blocks made by Conigliaro Industries are used as force protection at the Massachusetts National Guard Headquarters in Milford, Mass.

The blocks, patch and other products were invented and developed by Greg's father, Tony Conigliaro, who now serves as vice president of engineering after retiring as a mechanical and industrial design engineer a few years ago.

The blocks can be used by the military in place of a variety of barriers, including sandbags; soil berms; and bin revetments made from 55-gallon drums, timbers, tires and wood/metal prefabricated kits.

"The military end of our business is starting to grow now, and we'll concentrate on that," he said. Plas-Crete blocks, weighing about 1,850 pounds each, are strong, heavy and thick enough to serve as protection, but light enough to assemble quickly.

A crew of two can place the blocks at a rate of 25 per hour using block-inset hooks, a chain and either a Bobcat, forklift or backhoe, according to the company.

The blocks protect resources by deflecting near-miss bomb and projectile blasts, weapons' fire, and shrapnel, the firm said. The product also is ideal for use by businesses as retaining walls; material bins; and for rapid, low-cost construction applications, the company said.



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