

Small business focus: Printer

Turning waste into dollars the Larkin way

Larkin Industries in St Paul recently took advantage of the **PIM Great Printer certification** and the Retired Engineers Technical Assistance Program (RETAP).

Mike and Lynn Larkin of Larkin Industries started their print business in 1976. They had 10 employees in year one, and now have more than double that. From the beginning, they have recycled printing scrap paper by making connections with a local paper manufacturing company.

A recent waste reduction effort started with a look at their waste bill after paying \$14,500 in 2007. The company did internal waste audit and found that besides paper products, plastics and metals were thrown away. With employee feedback, they identified separation opportunities. Waste generation went down due to employee training, new placement of material separation containers, and staff recycling responsibilities. Income from recyclables doubled to almost \$57,000 in 2008 and waste hauling bills dropped 90 percent to an annual \$1,400.

With the downturn in the economy, the value of recycled materials has dropped, but the savings from the waste hauling continues to increase as they find new ways to recycle or reuse their wastes. As a member of the PIM Great Printer program, Larkin can tap into a network of other businesses facing the same challenges.

Larkin also recently worked with the Minnesota Retired Engineers Technical Assistance Program (RETAP) to conduct an energy and waste audit. The free assessment was conducted by retired engineers with experience reducing waste, reusing and recycling materials, energy efficiency, and resource conservation. The assessment was used for additional ideas to meet the "beyond compliance" commitment of their Great Printer certification. Projects Larkin has completed to help them reach reduction goals include:

- Replaced older 40W T-12 fluorescent lamps with more efficient 32W T-8 units
- Installed a sealing system around loading dock doors, which lowered natural gas use and netted a rebate to help defray installation costs.
- Enrolled in electric utility energy saver switch program on air conditioning units to allow the power company to turn off the units during peak energy use. Larkin saves up to \$500 per month on their energy bill during the summer.
- Conducted a water use audit that addressed a dry period spike in the bill when the lawn sprinklers were overused. The company installed a separate irrigation meter on the sprinkling system and changed timing on the sprinklers.

Mike and Lynn found that paying attention to utility bills was equivalent to found money. Lynn often thinks of her dad's reminder to "take care of the nickels and dimes, and the dollars will take care of themselves." Contact SBEAP for more information on waste reduction programs.

Larkin Industries www.larkinind.com/

Minnesota Retired Engineers Technical Assistance Program
www.pca.state.mn.us/oea/p2/retap.cfm



Plastics Recycling

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used items when possible, and have gone away from using disposable items whenever possible. Most importantly, the approximately \$70,000 we save annually on energy costs goes toward our program services for people with disabilities."

Commercial plastics recycling

Merrick has had approximately 30 individuals employed in a plastic bag/shrink wrap recycling program over the last six years. In addition to employing clients, this program has kept more than 5.5 million pounds of plastic out of landfills and incinerators. Merrick also has document destruction and recycling operations and a partnership with water bottlers that grinds large water jug tops for recycling.

This year, Merrick's recycling program is focusing on local businesses that generate plastics, such as stretch film and shrink wrap. Merrick is looking for local businesses wanting to dispose of plastics in a cheaper and more environmentally sound manner.

In large enough quantities, they will pick up plastics for a business. An example would be a recent partnership with Fairview Hospitals and clinics to recycle their stretch film and shrink wrap, and collect other recyclables from hospitals for recycling. At Merrick, the plastic is baled and sold to Trex, which turns it into maintenance-free decking. Plastics they accept are: stretch film from pallets, shrink wrap from case goods, retail plastic bags, and hard plastic strapping if it accompanies other recyclable plastics. Rates range from free to quite reasonable and all material must be clean and dry. Contact John Crea at Merrick at 651-789-6211 or johnc@merrickinc.org for more information on plastics recycling.