

Business Spotlight

2010 Clean Air Award Recipient: Fiber-Tech Industries

The recipient of the 2010 Clean Air Award is Fiber-Tech Industries located in Spokane Valley Industrial Park. The award is presented annually by the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency to a business that has consistently demonstrated a significant commitment of resources to reduce overall air emissions. The award will be presented to the company at an event ceremony next month.

Fiber-Tech Industries is the largest supplier of fiberglass reinforced plywood panels to the transportation, construction and agricultural markets in the U.S. and Canada. The company incorporated in 1983 and operates one of its three U.S. locations at the Spokane Valley Industrial Park.

As part of the process to manufacture fiberglass-reinforced panels, plywood is bonded to a surface material generally a gel coat, using polyester resin reinforced with preformed fiberglass. Styrene, which is considered a Hazardous Air Pollutant and a Volatile Organic Compound (VOC), is contained in the resins and gel coats and emitted as part of the process.

Beginning in 2000, Fiber-Tech commenced a significant project to implement several major pollution prevention technologies at their Spokane facility. Now at the end of that project, Fiber-Tech has

reduced their facility-wide emissions of styrene and other VOCs by over 55%.

In order to achieve these dramatic emission reductions, Fiber-Tech implemented pollution prevention technologies in their materials, processes and products.

Materials—With the help of raw material suppliers, materials were developed that would meet Fiber-

Products—With cooperation from their suppliers and customers, Fiber-Tech was able to replace gel coat surfaces with non-emitting surfaces on key products.

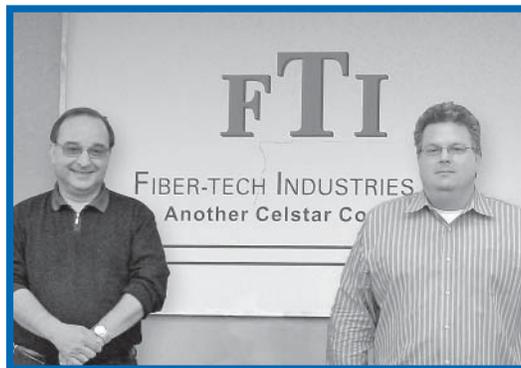
Implementation of these technologies took a significant commitment of time and resources. The company worked extensively with their suppliers to develop lower VOC materials that could be used with their current equipment.

Once the new technologies were implemented, these new panels had to be field-tested.

Fiber-Tech vendors tested the products for overall weatherability, and Washington State University tested the materials for strength and durability. Using this data, Fiber-Tech was able to get customer acceptance for all of the process changes.

With all of the pollution prevention advances in place, Fiber-Tech's VOC emissions at the facility have been reduced by 98 tons per year, which translates to a 55% reduction in emissions from the facility.

“Spokane Clean Air is proud to recognize Fiber Tech for their efforts and innovation we and appreciate their efforts to improve our air quality,” comments Bill Dameworth, Director of Spokane Clean Air. ■



Roger Mola (left) and Rick Sherwood of Fiber-Tech Industries, Inc.

Tech's requirements at the lower emissions levels. This was achieved by reducing the VOC content and suppressing the evaporation of the VOCs in the materials.

Processes—After several years of development, a low atomizing application used in other processes was adapted for Fiber-Tech's gel coat process. The new process creates larger droplets which reduces the emitting area during application. It also allows less material to be used for a given coating thickness.