

Business Spotlight

Inland Empire Paper Co.

For nearly 100 years, Inland Empire Paper Company (IEP) has been making paper products at their facility in Millwood, just east of Spokane. IEP is one of North America's most competitive paper mills, making 525 tons of newsprint and specialty paper products daily for distribution across the country.

One of IEP's corporate philosophies is to minimize its impact on the environment and surrounding community. To this end, the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency (Spokane Clean Air) is spotlighting IEP for their efforts to reduce air emissions and odors.

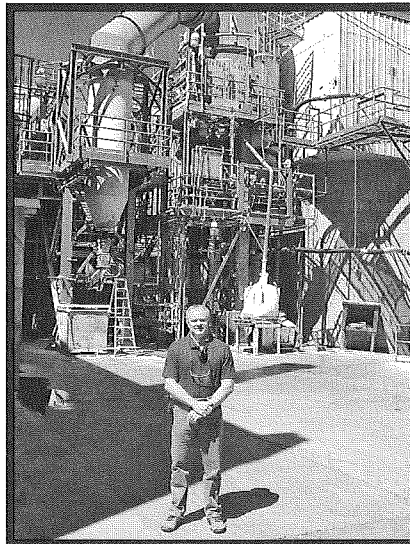
In 2001, IEP installed a modern, energy efficient paper machine which today remains the newest of its kind in North America. The machine uses heat recovery and water reuse to minimize energy and water usage.

Most of the paper made at IEP is from waste products. About half of the pulp used to make the paper is from recycled newsprint (100,000 tons per year!) The other half of the pulp is made from waste wood chips supplied by local sawmills. Using recycled newsprint and waste wood chips diverts a significant amount of waste from the local waste stream.

During the process of de-inking old newspapers, sludge is produced. Most of the sludge is burned in the fluidized bed combustor. IEP was the first company in North America to install and operate a fluidized bed

combustion (FBC) system consuming 100% paper sludge. The FBC system, installed over a decade ago, produces steam that is used as part of the paper making process.

The ash produced by the fluidized bed combustor is sent to a company that recycles it into concrete.



Doug Krapas stands near the Fluidized Bed Combustor at Inland Empire Paper Company's Millwood facility.

There is some overflow sludge that can't be burned and must be sent to a landfill for disposal. Previously, the sludge was stored in a 3-sided enclosure until it was hauled off, which resulted in odors from the open air storage and the loading of the sludge into trucks. Last summer, IEP installed a new sludge handling system. The system has an enclosed conveyance that deposits sludge directly into covered trucks. This eliminated the open air storage and "double handling" of the sludge.

Another aspect of IEP's process is handling large quantities of wood chips. In 2006, a new chip handling system was installed, including a new truck/railcar unloading station and enclosed mechanical conveyance system. The new chip gravity distribution system has virtually eliminated sawdust emissions associated with the previous pneumatic (forced-air) conveyance system.

"These two new systems have been extremely successful in addressing the dust and odor emissions," said Doug Krapas, IEP's Environmental Compliance Engineer. "Feedback from the local community has been very positive," he added.

In the near future, IEP plans to install a state-of-the-art pulping system that will replace the system originally installed in the 1960s. The proposed system recovers waste heat that exits the stacks of the older pulping systems. The recovered energy will provide significant environmental benefits, including a 77% drop in natural gas usage. This will result in an equivalent reduction in emissions from the combustion of natural gas currently used in the process.

IEP has established itself as an industry leader in environmental management. IEP has committed significant resources to reduce air emissions, many of which have not been mandated of them. Spokane Clean Air recognizes Inland Paper Company for their efforts, which benefit our entire community. ■