



NEWS

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System Helps Sort Vinyl Plastics Out of Municipal Waste

NEW TECHNOLOGY WILL HELP REDUCE LANDFILL BURDEN

WASHINGTON, October 31, 1990 -- A national trade association representing the vinyl plastics industry announced here today that work has been completed on a new system that will enable municipalities and other solid waste handlers to include vinyl plastics in the typical large-scale municipal recycling program. A commercial demonstration unit of the system is scheduled to be installed in suburban Chicago early next year, it was announced.

The system, announced by the Vinyl Institute, was developed by National Recovery Technologies, Inc., (NRT), a private company headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. It is designed to identify and sort out rigid vinyl containers from other plastic containers typically found mixed together in the municipal waste stream. According to Charles Roos, president of National Recovery Technologies, the system is based on proprietary technology that uniquely identifies the vinyl plastics that are passed through it and then physically separates them using a customized processing unit. The system was developed with funding from the Vinyl Institute. Additional funding came from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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Roy T. Gottesman, executive director of the Vinyl Institute, noted that the system results in a separated stream of vinyl plastics that can be cleaned and prepared for reprocessing, and eventually recycled into a number of different products. "The NRT system will allow municipalities and waste handlers to extract yet one more valuable component from the municipal waste stream, thus further reducing the demand on dwindling landfill space. At the same time, it will make better use of a material with hundreds of applications in consumer and industrial products," Gottesman said.

The largest market for vinyl plastics is in the construction industry, where it is used in items such as house siding, piping, floor coverings, window frames and wire and cable coverings. About 10 percent is used in packaging applications that include bottles, blister packaging and flexible film (food wrap). According to recent estimates, vinyl plastics make up about one half of one percent of all items found in the municipal solid waste stream.

A recent study completed by the University of Toledo identified nearly 100 potential uses for recycled vinyl and estimated that potential demand for it could reach over 490 million pounds a year. Currently, only about 200 million pounds of disposable vinyl exists in the waste stream -- meaning that demand for recycled vinyl could far outstrip potential supply, Gottesman noted.

"Essentially, the NRT technology moves vinyl one step closer to being a full player in the solid waste management process," Gottesman observed. "Regardless of whether a community presorts its recyclables or not, it means that vinyl plastics can be separated from other

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components in the waste stream. The new commercial demonstration unit that NRT plans to install in suburban Chicago later this year will show how that can be done." NRT and the Vinyl Institute announced that the commercial demonstration unit is scheduled to be installed at the material recovery facility operated by X-L Disposal Corp. in Crestwood, Illinois, during the first quarter of 1991. NRT is also working with a Vinyl Institute associate member, the European Vinyls Corporation of Brussels, Belgium, to use this technology in a closed loop total plastics recycling plant located in the United Kingdom.

NRT expects to have the vinyl separation system available for commercial applications by early 1991. As part of its contract with the Vinyl Institute, NRT has agreed to actively promote the commercialization of the separation process and make it available to users on a nonexclusive basis.

NRT has worked with several large municipalities -- including Chicago, New York City and Miami -- to establish separation systems for municipal solid waste. In addition to this new vinyl separation technology, it earlier developed systems to sort and recover aluminum, glass and ferrous metals from other solid waste components.

The Vinyl Institute, representing the leading manufacturers of PVC (polyvinyl chloride, or vinyl) plastics, raw materials, additives, and vinyl film and sheet products, maintains an active program of technical research designed to help integrate vinyl products into all phases of the solid waste process. It is a division of The Society of the Plastics Industry, Inc. and is headquartered in Wayne, New Jersey.

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