



NEWS

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NASHVILLE COMPANIES LEAD NEW RECYCLING EFFORT

NASHVILLE, Tenn., August 6, 1991 — Large-scale separation of post-consumer vinyl plastics from municipal waste has moved one step closer to practicality with the installation of an automated vinyl separation unit at the Steiner-Liff Iron and Metal Co. materials handling facility located here. The new unit was developed by Nashville-based National Recovery Technologies (NRT), with funding provided by the Vinyl Institute and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Steiner-Liff installation is the first public commercial-scale demonstration of vinyl separation technology in the country.

The NRT technology, which was announced last fall in Washington, D.C., is designed to identify and sort out rigid vinyl containers (bottles) from other plastic containers typically found mixed together in the municipal waste stream. According to Edward J. Sommer, executive vice president of National Recovery Technologies, the system is based on proprietary technology that identifies the vinyl plastics that are passed through it and then physically separates them using a customized processing unit. Vinyl is the only plastic packaging material that can be so identified and separated at this time. Steve Nedelman, vice president, non-ferrous, of Steiner-Liff, notes that the system is compatible

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with a variety of recycling collection systems: It can be used with mixed plastics that have been sorted curbside by the homeowner; it can be used to sort mixed plastics taken from drop-off centers; and it can even be used as a final "refining" step to handle unseparated refuse processed at material recovery facilities or municipal solid waste processing facilities.

"We were extremely pleased to be selected by the Vinyl Institute and NRT as the demonstration site for this new technology," said Nedelman, "because we consider ourselves to be on the cutting edge of the new recycling industry that is taking shape in this country." He noted that plastics recycling is one of the fastest growing segments of the recycling business. According to the Washington-based Council for Solid Waste Solutions, there currently are about 500 curbside recycling programs across the country that include plastics. That number is projected to grow to about 4,000 by 1994.

Roy T. Gottesman, executive director of the Vinyl Institute, noted that recent research has indicated a large market for recycled vinyl. A study completed by the University of Toledo last year 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 supply. The largest market for vinyl plastics is in the construction industry, where it is used in such items as house siding, piping, floor coverings, window frames, and wire and cable coverings. Some of the potential uses for recycled vinyl are in these large-volume applications such as pipe and siding.

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"There's no question this country is becoming a nation of recyclers," Gottesman said. "And we want to make sure that vinyl can be easily and economically folded into the various recycling approaches that develop. The NRT technology reduces the need for consumers to individually separate the various plastics they recycle, and it makes culling vinyl plastics out of the waste stream far more feasible for waste handlers."

Steiner-Liff is a diversified scrap-processing and full-service recycling company. Last year, the company collected 5,000 tons of plastic and recently opened a plastics division dedicated to recycling post-consumer and industrial plastics. The Vinyl Institute is a national trade association representing the leading manufacturers of vinyl, vinyl feedstocks, additives, and film and sheet products. The Institute is a division of The Society of the Plastics Industry and is headquartered in Wayne, New Jersey.

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