

NEWS RELEASE
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RECYCLING TO BE PRIORITY OF VINYL ROOFING INDUSTRY

With its European counterparts blazing the trail, the North American vinyl (PVC) roofing industry announced a new phase in its commitment to environmental sustainability through recycling. The Vinyl Roofing Division of the Chemical Fabrics & Film Association has initiated a feasibility study to evaluate strategies for making post-consumer recycling in North America viable on a broad scale.

Incorporating the lessons learned from several pilot projects in the U.S., the Division's member manufacturers intend to combine existing post-consumer recycling technologies with logistical expertise to limit vinyl's contribution to landfill waste. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, construction and demolition waste totals an estimated 136 million tons annually.

"Skyrocketing raw material costs, higher landfill tipping fees, legislation to restrict disposal of construction materials – and an architectural community that demands the lightest environmental footprint that can be achieved – all are leading toward the mainstreaming of post-consumer recycling and a vision of the day when specifiers call for recycling of roofs at the end of their service life," said Jay Thomas, marketing chair of the Vinyl Roofing Division.

Post-consumer recycling of vinyl roof membranes in the U.S. began in 1999, and in 1994 in Europe. Today, state-of-the-art grinding equipment makes it possible to process roofing membrane that has reached the end of its service life and convert it to feedstock for new roofing membrane products.

In its pilot projects, the Division found that the savings in disposal fees and the value of the salvaged materials generally exceeded the cost of the additional labor, shipping and grinding fees. Total net costs are dependent on total roofing square footage, the distance that the old roof must be shipped to be processed, and avoided landfill tipping fees.

"Vinyl is the only roofing material that has been demonstrated to be recyclable at the end of its life back into roofing product," Thomas said. "A sustainable post-consumer recycling strategy requires high quality reclamation in the tear-down, reprocessing efficiency and a ready customer base for the recycled product – all addressed on a large scale.

“The North American vinyl roofing manufacturers are committed to developing the infrastructure to establish a viable program,” Thomas added. “With a strong desire for sustainable construction in the marketplace and efforts to divert construction waste from landfills, it appears that the time is right for roof recycling to grow.”

Vinyl roofs have been in use for more than 40 years in Europe, and roofing manufacturers there have been recycling retired roofs into other useful products since 1994. That was the year a consortium of companies funded the construction and operation of a facility in Germany to reclaim the growing volume of vinyl membranes at the end of their service lives and return them to the original manufacturers.

Today, a European Single Ply Waterproofing Association (ESWA) program, ROOFCOLLECT, coordinates the recovery and processing of post-consumer vinyl roofing membranes. In conjunction with the European Commission, ESWA sets annual targets for post-consumer roof recycling; in 2006, 4.4 million pounds of roofing membrane were recycled due to its efforts. Reports from the field indicate that, at 10+ years of age, the first membranes made with recycled post-consumer material are performing the same as membranes produced of virgin raw materials.

ESWA is now working with the recycler Interseroh (Cologne, Germany) to establish a pan-European collection system that would facilitate recycling in closer proximity to the job site. ESWA is also investigating strategies for incorporating higher percentages of recycled material into finished membranes.

For more information, and to read the new white paper “Avoiding the Landfill: The Recycling of Vinyl Roof Membranes,” visit www.vinylroofs.org.

The Vinyl Roofing Division of the Chemical Fabrics and Film Association was created to educate architects, specifiers, building owners and roofing contractors on the attributes of vinyl as the preferred material for reflective, durable, single ply roofing systems. Representing all of the leading manufacturers of vinyl roofing systems in North America, the Division is committed to making available sound, scientifically backed information on the environmental and functional performance of energy-efficient PVC roofing membranes.