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Appetite for destruction

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Photo caption: Outdated Consumables entering the pre-shredder at Conigliaro Industries, Framingham, MA. Photo credit: Conigliaro Industries.

Destruction is their business, and business is good.

Conigliaro Industries of Framingham and Security Engineered Machinery of Westborough specialize in tearing things apart. And, at a time when personal and corporate security are burgeoning concerns, both find ready takers for their services.

Conigliaro, well-known for its regional recycling work, will also loose its six-foot shredder on unwanted or illicit goods. Over the past decade, the Southside company has destroyed everything from a truckload of stolen Tang drink powder to a stack of Beanie Baby promotional giveaway cards, president Greg Conigliaro says.

"They sent two armed guards out with the truck," says Conigliaro, who estimates the Beanie cards were good for \$900,000 worth of the stuffed toys.



Photo caption: "Never-Built" 486 computers await the crusher, casualties of the Pentium Chip, Photo credit: Conigliaro Industries.

From manuals to bank cards - Walk through the work areas of Conigliaro Industries' Waverley Street plant, and you're liable to see a little bit of everything. Stray newspapers and brochures litter the floor, and Greg Conigliaro pushes empty plastic milk crates out of the way with his foot.

That clutter comes from the company's thriving recycling business. The company processes 50,000 pounds of material a day -- milk jugs, grocery bags, paper and other detritus of MetroWest life, some of which inevitably breaks free from bales and floats around the floor.

But, when necessary, Conigliaro Industries can make products disappear without a trace -- or, at least, reduce them to unrecognizable quarter-inch granules. The company added its destruction niche a few years ago, according to its president.



Computer manuals, "once shred" by Conigliaro Industries AZ-80 Shredder.

"It was directly tied to when we added bigger shredding machines for recycling operations," he says. "We offer this as a side benefit for our customers."

That ability appeals to colleges and hospitals, who rely on Conigliaro to shred top-secret student and medical records in bulk.

High-tech companies turn to Conigliaro to destroy large quantities of outdated personnel manuals, while coupon-book makers truck in loads of expired books. The recycler also trashed leftover ATM cards stamped with BayBank's logo after new owner Bank of Boston phased out the name. "They were beautiful," Greg Conigliaro recalls. "They were nice plastic."

Conigliaro's destruction work -- which makes up about 20 percent of its business -- has also wreaked havoc on all kinds of mis-labeled, outdated or flawed consumer goods.

One shaving-cream company changed its packaging, then shipped over brand-new, unfilled cans stamped with its old label. Greg Conigliaro says companies would rather destroy those products than see them land on the shelves of discount retail stores.

It's not rare for the company to trash unused products. On one recent morning, a fresh box of factory-wrapped copier parts waited to take the short conveyor-belt ride into the shredder.

"We've had brand-new computer cabinets that were never made into computers, because they were 486 and then Pentium came out," he says, referring to cutting-edge computer chips.

The cost of destruction, and the size of the finished product, depends on the load and the client's needs. Computer parts can be ripped into quarter-inch shreds or further processed into gravel-sized lumps.

Conigliaro will also videotape or photograph the process, and provide a certificate of destruction. Sometimes, clients send an observer to make sure the destroyers don't help themselves to a free T-shirt or coupon. "Our employees are very good about that," Greg Conigliaro says.



Computer Shells head for Conigliaro Industries' Herbold Granulator - to be ground to 1/8" minus.

Most of what Conigliaro destroys ends up being recycled. Computer cabinets are reborn as road patch, while food products usually end up feeding farm animals -- with a few exceptions.

"If you have something edible, there are pig farmers who love it," Greg Conigliaro says. "They don't like chocolate, though -- the pigs get too hyper." ...



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