Conigliaro Industries "In the News"

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The True Information Superhighway

American Plastics Council "Power of Plastics" Online Newsletter
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So your computer dies and you've successfully transferred software and data onto a new one, leaving you with the plastic casing and the electrical components. What do you do with it now?

Refurbishing the electrical components for use into other electronic devices, such as answering machines and video games, is a practice more and more companies nationwide are participating in. But what about that plastic used in the housing for the chips and components (which constitutes 18-20 pounds of a computer's weight)? Computer housings can be shredded and reformed into, for instance, plastic lumber or even mixed into the roads we drive on - a literal "information superhighway." How does this innovative process work?

Recently, a Framingham, Mass. Recycling firm, Conigliaro Industries, Inc. joined the foray into firms that disassemble and resell electronic components but with a different concentration. They focus on recycling the plastic portion of computers with, for instance, ground plastic materials mixed as an aggregate and integrated into an asphalt matrix products then used as a base in road underlayments. And in April of this year, they demonstrated a way to convert the plastics found in electronics into pothole filler.

Discarded computer and electronic housings such as these can be recycled into a true "information superhighway" - underlays and pothole filler for the roads we drive.

This innovative approach to recycling computer and electronic housings, such as copiers and printers, involves granulating plastics into a lightweight "asphalt-type" cold-patch mixture that can by used in any type of weather or temperature. Mixed with a proprietary emulsion formula, the resulting product utilizes approximately 20 pounds of plastics per pail (approximately half the weight of the typical patching component used on potholes) and accounts for almost 75 percent of the product volume. The patch then sets within hours, resulting in permanent repair to the road.

In the Northeast, this recycling process consumes up to 12.5 tons of computer and other plastic housings a day and the potential to recycle over 12 million pounds of plastics electronic equipment a year exists. The success of this program is drawing attention nation and worldwide and hopefully, with estimates that by 2005, 150 million computers will have been recycled, other communities will attempt Conigliaro's program. In fact, Conigliaro Industries' use of recycled plastic for road underlayments and pothole filler is just one innovative solution to the challenge presented by the increasing stream of outdated computers and electronic equipment.

Recently IBM took recycling of plastics and computers one step further - to the very beginning of a computer's "life" by launching the world's first 100% recycled resin desktop computer. In March, IBM announced that its IntelliStation E Pro, has all of its major plastic parts constructed from 100% recycled resin, something the computer industry had never attempted before in new system production. And once this desktop comes to the end of it's "life", it can be recycled into the roads we drive on. A triumph for plastic recycling from beginning to end.

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