Firmly established end markets have allowed scrap tire processors to collect and shred with increasing confidence.

In an article in the October 2010 issue of Recycling Today (“Safer, Stronger, Smarter” starting on page 50), Liberty Tire Recycling Vice President Kurt Meyer referred to several recent studies on recycled rubber in playground applications, including one conducted in California and released in April of 2010 and another released by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in late 2009.

"Similar to the conclusions of as many as 100 state-level studies, the EPA study reports that crumb rubber poses no significant health or environmental risks," wrote Meyer.

The TDF market has also been studied and defended by companies in that sector. At the 2008 Greenbuild event in Boston, the Portland Cement Association (PCA), Shokke, Ill., hosted a press conference to issue a reminder that that industry remains a critical consumer of scrap tires.

The PCA says that in studying the emissions effects of TDF plants, it found differences between using TDF and traditional fossil fuels that favored TDF. "Dioxin/furan emission tests results indicated that kilns firing TDF had emissions approximately one-third of those kilns firing conventional fuels—this difference was statistically significant," says the PCA summary.

According to PCA researcher Tyrone Wilson, in addition to cutting dioxin emissions, the use of TDF reduced particulate matter emissions by 35 percent.

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INVESTING LONG TERM

Among the companies on the 2010 Largest Scrap Tire Processors List, the company atop the list has staked a claim on that top spot by a considerable margin.

Growing to a large extent through acquisition, Pittsburgh-based Liberty Tire Recycling has assembled a multi-state driving less (both leisure and commercial mileage), purchasing considerably fewer new vehicles and probably are more inclined to squeeze a few thousand more miles out of a set of tires.

Whereas at one time, mountains of scrap tire stockpiles pointed to a market with lopsided supply vs. demand, as of 2010, some tire processors are taking in a smaller share of scrap tires than they were in 2006 or 2007.

Certain end markets, though better established now than in the 1990s, have also diminished in volume, particularly those destined for landscaping, construction and civil engineering applications.

GREEN LIGHTS

Scrap tire processors and the organizations that represent them have helped stabilize and secure end markets, in part by conducting research to dispute criticisms of their products.

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