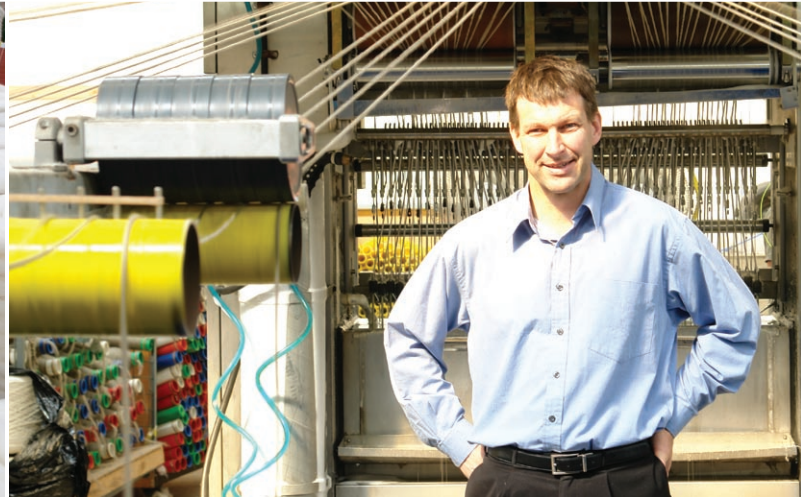


Wood pellets and industry a winning combination



Mick Ingram

RADFORD YARN TECHNOLOGIES

An innovative Christchurch company whose ability to spot niche markets has been judged the Supreme Award winner in the 2009 Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) Awards for its conversion to wood pellet fuel.

The EECA Awards judges say Radford Yarn Technologies' move to wood energy is "a terrific example of an innovative, renewable energy project using a new technology on an industrial scale. This has excellent potential for replication across other organisations and industries."

Radford Yarn Technologies, which employs 33 staff to turn out rare felted yarn for the carpets of luminaries such as Lenny Kravitz, Jennifer Aniston and Madonna, has reorganised its operations to ensure its environmental footprint is acceptable to even the most discerning of customers. Switching to wood pellets for its process heat is an important part of that.

The new boiler cut electricity usage in half, slashed the energy bill by 25% and reduced the time needed to dry yarn by between three and six hours.

About 80% of the company's business is offshore and General Manager, Mick Ingram, says environmental market signals from the United States and Europe are getting stronger.

"Customers are smart and they are starting to ask questions. When we first promoted the environmental angle, it was because we felt it made sense to emphasise nature in a natural product such as wool, but we can see it is going to become more and more important.

"We use a boiler to supply hot water for felting and to dry the yarn

afterwards. As we grew, the electric boiler was becoming too costly and was struggling to provide the grunt we needed.

"When we chose Nature's Flame, we did so because its clean energy fitted perfectly with where we were pitching our brand."

The new boiler not only complemented Radford's environmental philosophy but it cut electricity usage in half, slashed the energy bill by 25% and reduced the time needed to dry consignments of yarn by between three and six hours.

As emissions come under closer scrutiny from regulators and consumers, businesses deriving process heat from boilers as big as 2MW are being encouraged to consider switching from fossil fuels to wood pellets.

According to Solid Energy's Energy Projects Manager, Duncan Mackenzie, some regional councils are reluctant to renew consents for coal-fired boilers as they come under pressure to deliver consistent air quality improvements in line with the National Environmental Standards (NES).

"When burning wood pellets, particulate emissions drop almost 60% against coal, which means regional councils are much more likely to renew consents and in most cases businesses can make the switch without changing their boiler," he says.

Solid Energy's wood pellet business, Nature's Flame, has spent the past two years converting schools, universities and Government departments to wood pellets and is eyeing private enterprise, especially now that pellets undercut diesel, LPG and electricity on price.

Because Nature's Flame pellets are made from recycled wood, they are carbon neutral under the Kyoto Protocol, and they also emit 57% fewer particulates, 75% less nitrous oxide and 90% less sulphur dioxide.

Winner
Supreme Award &
Renewable Energy Award
EECA Awards
2009

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