

## Tireless Efforts?

### Waste Tires Decreasing; Alternatives Become Focus

**B**izVoice® reported in its July/August 2004 issue that Indiana was home to an estimated 13.5 million stockpiled waste tires with an additional six million tires being generated each year. Reducing those stockpiles, which pose a major environmental threat among other concerns, had become a strong focus of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) at that time.

Bruce Palin, assistant commissioner for IDEM's Office of Land Quality, reports that a large part of the cleanup has been accomplished in the past four years. "We have eliminated the large tire dump sites, though we do have one large site in Muncie we are still working on. Based on what we have observed, we don't seem to have new tire sites popping up."

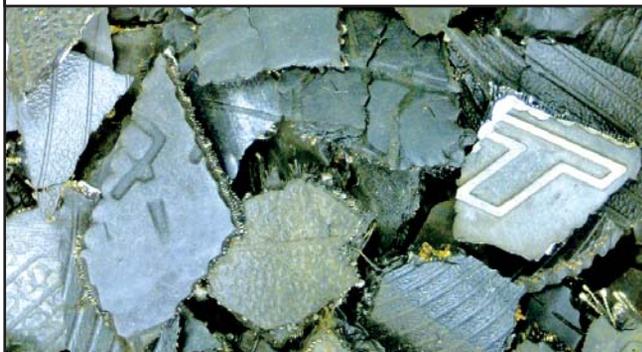
He estimates the number of stockpiled tires has been reduced by 50%. Cleaning up the potentially harmful sites didn't come cheap for businesses or the state.

"We went through a phase where some of our tire processing facilities became a problem because it was a question if they could afford to clean up the sites or go bankrupt. Some of them have gone bankrupt and left us with a huge mess to clean up," Palin recalls.

Nearly all of the funding for tire cleanup comes from the state's Waste Tire Management Fund (WTMF), generated by a 25-cent-per-tire disposal fee paid at the point of purchase by consumers.



Waste tire cleanup efforts have achieved results in recent years, but the need continues for additional alternative uses.



#### More work to be done

Asked to compare Indiana's handling of waste tires to that of other states, Palin comments, "We've always been kind of behind the curve (other states had funding in place and initiated their programs earlier) as far as eliminating our tire dump sites. As far as using tires in alternative markets, we are probably on the same level. Currently there are adequate funds to deal with the dumps around the state. We now need to make sure there are markets ready to absorb the six million tires generated (annually)."

Helping to create these alternative markets for tires is IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance (OPPTA). Since accepting administrative responsibility for the program, OPPTA has established interim grants of up to \$100,000 for innovative projects that utilize Indiana waste tires. Non-profit organizations, businesses, solid waste management districts, local units of government and schools are eligible to apply for the grants.

"The big picture is we are trying to develop the sustainable markets and that is the focus going forward," reports Rick Bossingham, assistant commissioner of OPPTA.

#### Tires as fuel

One major alternative market mentioned by both Bossingham and Palin is tire-derived fuel. Tires serve as a powerful energy source when properly burned. Palin notes that a ton of tire scraps has a higher burn value than a ton of coal.

Ed Epping, plant manager of Lehigh Cement Company in Mitchell, is interested in utilizing that energy in his company's kilns.

"We will triple the size of our plant by 2012, and we would like to replace about 20% of our coal use with tires," Epping reveals. "At this replacement rate, we would use up to 4.5 million tires per year."

Epping credits the state with being the main driver for Lehigh's consideration of tires as an energy source. "They came to us years ago and asked what we could do to burn tires because of the huge (environmentally harmful) tire fires in landfills," Epping reveals. "When we burn tires inside our kiln, there is no black smoke or anything. The black smoke is organic material caused by inefficient burn, but our kiln is so hot that everything is consumed."

Lehigh doesn't use tires in its current process because it is not cost effective given the design of the plant's kilns. The plant expansion will have tire use built into the system. Epping suggests, however, that any state grants to cover some of the capital costs associated with such system adaptations would make using tires for fuel much more attractive to companies statewide.

To view the July/August 2004 BizVoice® story on waste tires, go to the archives section of [www.bizvoicemagazine.com](http://www.bizvoicemagazine.com)



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