

NEWS RELEASE

Turning old tires into an efficient source of fuel

(Detroit, MI) - Most people look at a pile of used auto tires and see a dangerous eyesore. But when Kelly Dodson, marketing manager of Akron Thermal, L.P., sees those discarded tires, he sees lots of British thermal units (Btus) just waiting to be turned into energy to fire the boilers and produce steam.

Akron Thermal, which, like Detroit Thermal is owned by Thermal Ventures II, adds shredded scrap tires to its fuel mix. The clean-burning mixture not only helps reduce costs, it also helps the company reduce its reliance on any single fuel source.

Akron Thermal began adding tire-derived fuel (TDF) to the fuel mix that runs its boilers in 2004. The results have been encouraging. During the first year, the company used about 1,000 tons of TDF per month. The new fuel produces a thousand Btus of heat for about one-tenth the cost of natural gas and has allowed Akron Thermal to reduce significantly the amount of natural gas it uses.

Alternative fuels prove their value

Using TDF is a complicated process that requires new technology and special equipment. The tires must be shredded to one-inch pieces and the bead wire removed. Then the TDF must be mixed at exact ratios with other fuels such as waste wood or coal before it is delivered to the boilers. However, Akron Thermal's experience proves the potential for TDF.

"Volatility and price increases in the natural gas market make it important for us to explore the possibility of alternative fuels," said Mark Butta, vice president of business development for Thermal Ventures II. "In Detroit we already use steam produced by burning municipal waste at the Greater Detroit Resource Recovery Authority facility. Other alternative fuels may offer other opportunities."

Dollar savings and energy independence are just two of the advantages of TDF. Since the material in tires is a petroleum byproduct, it has an energy value nearly equal to that of oil. TDF produces 13,000 to 15,000 Btus per pound and has a low sulfur content. It burns cleaner than coal.

Community also benefits

The use of TDF also helps reduce tire stockpiles, which are often breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other pests, and it keeps discarded tires out of landfills. Akron Thermal estimates that it used about one million tires during its first year of operation with TDF.

"In Akron we find that mixing TDF with coal or waste wood produces a fuel that is readily available, clean-burning and less expensive," Butta said. "At the same time, it helps the community solve the problem of what to do with old tires, which present both a health hazard and an environmental problem."

Energy diversification has taken on new importance since President Bush mentioned his State of the Union message. Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm, in her State of the State address, called on Michigan to be the "alternative energy epicenter of America."

"Tire-derived fuel is proving to be a win-win situation in Akron," Dodson said. "It's good for us, for our customers and for our community."

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