Old carpet to fuel Shaw plant

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That old, weathered carpet torn out from your living room could now be used to make new carpet.

Officials with Dalton-based Shaw Industries said the company will build a reclaimed carpet-to-energy facility at the Plant 80 on North Hamilton Street (Westcott) carpet manufacturing facility in Dalton. This is Shaw's second alternative fuel-to-energy operation in the past five years -- the first is at Plant 81 (Springdale) near the North Bypass in Dalton -- with the company aiming to finish construction on the project by the fourth quarter of 2010.

"It's very exciting for us," said Rick Ramirez, Shaw vice president of sustainability. "It will also divert carpet from landfills, which is a major industry goal. There are a lot of reasons this becomes a strategic issue for Shaw. It just touches a lot of key points in terms of energy, landfill diversion and reducing emissions in the environment."

Designated as Re2E (Reclaim-to-Energy), the facility will be fueled by reclaimed carpet materials from both internal manufacturing operations and post-consumer carpet collections. The operation's alternative-fuels-fired boiler is expected to convert more than 76 million pounds annually of reclaimed carpet materials into steam and electricity for the manufacturing site.

Shaw's current alternative fuel-to-energy facility converts about 36 million pounds of combined post-industrial carpet and wood manufacturing by-products to steam energy through a gasification

process. The new Re2E facility will use only carpet materials as a fuel source, and a very large part of the 76-million-pound total is expected to originate from post-consumer carpet collected through Shaw's carpet reclamation network.

The Re2E process is projected to provide up to 50,000 pounds of steam per hour, which equates to more than 90 percent of the carpet plant's steam demands. In addition, the operation will supply the fuel preparation building with half of its electricity, or approximately 3.5 million kilowatt hours per year, which is equivalent to the average annual electrical usage of 300 households.

This facility will be equipped with advanced control technology to reduce emissions. Moreover, by utilizing diverted carpet material, Shaw will have the capability of reducing steam production costs significantly.

Ramirez added that the new carpet-to-energy facility will also support Shaw's goal of 10 percent alternative energy sources by 2017 and the company's waste reduction objectives, as well as the Carpet America Recovery Effort's (CARE) existing landfill diversion goal of 40 percent.

"This environmentally responsible initiative serves to underscore the company's core sustainability position, Sustainability through Innovation," Ramirez says. "As Shaw continues to demonstrate industry leadership in sustainability, strategies like Re2E provide environmentally responsible solutions in conserving natural resources and diverting useful materials from landfills; ultimately, it also makes good business sense."

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