Glatfelter Plant Moves “Full Steam Ahead” Towards Greater Efficiency (Chillicothe, Ohio)

Becoming more energy efficient does not require purchasing expensive new technologies. Mike Dombrowski, energy efficiency manager at Glatfelter’s Chillicothe plant, says the company’s 150-year-old mill is becoming more efficient using a form of energy dating back to early 19th century industry—steam. Today, the process is most commonly referred to as “combined heat and power” (CHP) technology. The Glatfelter CHP facility is run largely by coal mined in Southeastern Ohio.

The company’s flagship steam reduction project has been a key aspect of Glatfelter’s energy initiative. The company aims to reduce the total steam energy consumed by the plant and to utilize waste heat to replace steam where possible. Since starting in 2009, the energy initiative is over halfway to its goal of reducing the mill’s steam consumption by 20 percent. As a result of this, Glatfelter is reducing its CO₂ emissions from coal and decreasing its production costs.

Dombrowski says decreasing the steam use has had no negative impact on the company’s production. “Glatfelter is making the same amount of paper today that we’ve always made, we’re just doing it more efficiently,” he says.

As a company subject to U.S. EPA’s Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program, Glatfelter serves as a positive example of how energy reduction can lead to environmental and financial benefits. Though Glatfelter is currently managing several steam-related energy efficiency projects, Dombrowski has prioritized setting goals that coincide with the Department of Energy’s “Better Plants” Program.
The Better Plants program challenges power-generating plants to reduce their energy intensity by 25 percent over 10 years. Glatfelter is well on its way to its goal, having reduced its energy intensity by 19 percent in just three and a half years.

Mike Dombrowski, Energy Efficiency Manager, Specialty Papers Business Unit, P.H. Glatfelter Company, discusses energy initiatives at CE3’s “Workshop for Efficiency, Emissions & Energy Choices in Ohio” September 2013. Photo credit: Brice Nihiser.

Not only does Glatfelter use federal programs as guidance for energy best practices, it looks within the paper production industry as well. Glatfelter has utilized best practices from trade organizations such as the Technical Association of the Pulp & Paper Industry and the American Forest and Paper Association and attended workshops hosted by the Voinovich School’s Consortium for Energy, Economics & the Environment (CE3) to run the most competitive and ethical operations possible. Dombrowski served as a speaker at one such event, CE3’s “Workshop for Efficiency, Emissions & Energy Choices in Ohio” in September 2013. The Glatfelter energy team uses all of these resources to determine a realistic application of the practices given facility and financial limitations. By using its resources efficiently, Glatfelter’s Ohio Operation has reduced its total energy cost by more than US$5 million in 2013 and is positioned to have additional success in the coming years.

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