

Bright Words

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B.W.C.'S PETE HESTER SPEAKS AT TIMBER SUMMIT

During April's Timber Summit held in Portland, timber industry leaders in the United States were looking for people to address various wood related issues ranging from importing exotic wood species to the research and development of innovative engineered wood products, of which BWC has become an industry leader.

Pete Hester, Bright Wood's R&D Manager, was selected to speak in the area of engineered wood products.

We asked Pete what his topic of discussion was. "We have been doing considerable R&D on trying to recover more long clear fiber out of our lumber, and this has lead to considerable research into glues, wood and non-wood composites. In fact we recently were able to get a new door stile construction authorized by Andersen using a "Formica type" exterior surface which eliminates one wood veneer".

Hester also said he released news on a new process BWC has recently perfected that brought a lot of interest from everyone, especially Vice President Al Gore, who specifically asked Pete when we expect to be in production and what impact it will have on our employment. Pete mentioned "this will be a part of our new Plant #13 and should increase our employment by 50 people and decrease our wood waste by 75%".

We interviewed Chuck Rogness from Andersen Corp. and he said, "this new process will be excellent for #2 sash core and #4 frame member I can't wait for the first samples to put through our tests". Dan Michaelis, an engineer at Andersen commented, "when Pete first explained it to me it sounded like "snake oil technology", but now I'm a believer, and I would stand in line to buy this product".

According to Pete, the process is very sophisticated and borrows some technologies used in the particle-board and paper industries. It involves reprocessing our scrap wood and sawdust back into a reusable higher value product. Our waste wood must first be ground up into a fine saw dust, then treated with a recently developed glue that creates a very thick liquid substance. This glue was developed with the Scientists at National Starch & Chemical, our glue supplier. We asked Lance Carter our National Starch Customer Rep. his opinion. "This was a real example of TQM and a Supplier-Customer Partnership for the future. This new product should provide some excellent new product properties not found in normal lumber or particle board".

The next process is very simple, but proper use of the equipment is critical. The wood and glue mixture must be carefully injected with long needles into a piece of very wet cutstock. Immediately after this injection, the piece of wood will run lengthwise through a series of rollers that puts thousands of pounds of pressure on the board. The injected wood/glue mixture actually bonds to the wood's own fibers allowing the pressure rolls to slowly stretch the piece into a longer one. Pete Hester estimates he can take 2'1" No. 20 and stretch it enough to make a 7' door jamb.

According to Pete, the idea actually came to him about eight years ago, while he was using his pasta maker to mix regular Italian pasta with inexpensive but nutritional high fiber "wood flour" to feed his growing family.

Everyone said it couldn't be done, but Bright Wood has created the first "board stretcher." And with it's April 1st Timber Summit release the Clinton Administration knows we are no April Fool.