Murray company meets a recycling need

Recycling » ACH Foam Technologies recycles a foam that's not biodegradable.

By LESLEY MITCHELL
The Salt Lake Tribune

Expanded polystyrene — known as EPS — is a popular packaging material. Ever ordered some food such as Omaha Steaks in the mail that came in a white disposable cooler? How about the white packaging material that protected your computer in the shipping box?

Then you have received some expanded polystyrene — and it probably went in the trash can. Many municipal recycling facilities don’t accept it, which is a big reason why only about a third of post-consumer EPS is recycled.

Why is recycling EPS so important? Unlike other materials, EPS isn’t biodegradable.

That’s why ACH Foam Technologies has started a campaign to prevent more of the popular packaging material from ending up in landfills. ACH, which has a manufacturing facility in Murray, already had a company-wide recycling program when it decided to expand its efforts further.

“We’re trying to connect people with resources to recycle this material,” said Todd Huempfner, vice president of operations for the Denver-based company. “It’s just too easy to walk up to a waste receptacle and just dump it.”

The company is now reaching out to corporate customers and consumers who end up tossing the EPS that ACH makes in Murray and at 10 other manufacturing facilities nationwide.

ACH has joined an effort by the Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers (AFPR) to increase awareness of EPS recycling. It has contacted large companies that buy the material from them and has helped a number of them establish recycling programs. Instead of simply throwing the material away, many of these customers now collect it and either recycle it themselves or send it back to ACH for recycling.

To convince smaller companies and consumers to recycle the material, ACH’s manufacturing facilities have become drop-off facilities for smaller quantities of the material. (For detailed information on mail-in and drop-off sites for EPS, or for information on how to set up a corporate recycling program, go to www.espackaging.org/info.html).

Cheryl Prawl, a program manager with the Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s division of solid and hazardous waste, said consumers are increasingly putting more pressure on manufacturers to be more green.

Electronics manufacturers, for example, are being pushed to take on a larger role in recycling old equipment that otherwise would be thrown in the trash. Such programs, she said, can make a big difference.

She said recycling programs put in place by manufacturers such as ACH can help keep more of the material out of landfills — and inspire even more companies to be more environmentally conscious.

“It’s wonderful that they are actively trying to recycle material,” she said.