



CASE STUDY

On-the-Ground Pilot Recycling Initiative Makes an Immediate Impact

The Vinyl Siding Institute (VSI) Joins Forces with Member Manufacturers and Other Leading Organizations to Form the Northeast Ohio Vinyl Siding Recycling Coalition (NE-OH VSRC)

Introduction

It's a well-established fact that vinyl siding manufacturers are pioneers in the field of recycling, having invented vinyl siding in the late 1950s and 1960s and then innovating the category through the use of a co-extrusion process in the late 1970s/early 1980s.

This co-extrusion process essentially introduced the concept of "closed-loop" pre-industrial recycling – or at least the start of landfill diversion – in which 99% of the in-house scrap can be returned to the same manufacturing process to make more products. Over the years, continuous improvements to the finished products have made polymeric siding the most sustainable cladding on the market with regard to its durability, energy efficiency performance and limited impact on global warming. As part of these continuous improvement efforts, the industry is now focused on post-consumer recycling solutions.

The Challenge: The Case for an Aftermarket Vinyl Siding Recycling Model

For more than a year, VSI's Sustainability Committee has been working on a fact-finding mission to develop a recycling program model that may be replicated throughout North America. This includes keen observations of the best practices of their member-manufacturers, such as:

- [Cornerstone Brands' re-use through technology](#) and other numerous supply chain innovations
- [Kaycan's GreenSENSE R3V Program](#) launched in the summer of 2020 in response to a tornadic hailstorm that damaged thousands of homes in Southern Alberta, Canada
- [AZEK's innovative FULL-CIRCLE PVC Recycling Program](#) through leading polymer recycler Return Polymers -- a first of its kind on-the-ground program to collect and recycle waste and scrap PVC

In September, these prominent players came together in the geographic heart of the industry to form a meaningful alliance that will make a strong impact on polymeric siding's recycling program development.

The Solution: The Launch of the Northeast Ohio Vinyl Siding Recycling Coalition (NEOH-VSRC)

The NEOH-VSRC is a proactive industry-wide initiative serving Cuyahoga County (metro Cleveland)

and surrounding areas. Their objective is to set recycling standards and coordinate consumers, contractors, distributors, waste collectors, transportation groups, cleaners/recyclers, manufacturers and other relevant stakeholders to increase the amount of post-consumer recycling in the area.

Their current membership consists of all VSI member manufacturers and leading recyclers, among other groups. Working together with VSI staff, the Coalition has committed to employing the following key strategies to achieve their goals:

- Create an on-the-ground solution that works directly with dealers, contractors and mill shops to collect, return and recycle scrap PVC from fabrication shops, construction sites and remodeling projects
- Update list of Coalition members recognized as drop-off sites on VSI's website
- Develop an integrated communications and marketing program that drives industry-wide interest and recycling, including the development of collateral materials for Coalition members to use in their outreach efforts

The Results: High-Impact Progress in First Month

According to David Foell, President & CEO at Return Polymers, Inc. of Ashland, Ohio (a recycling Coalition member), the Coalition has recycled over 40,000 pounds of vinyl siding since they started organizing in mid-August. Foell attributes this early success to the recruitment of 20 collection sites spread out from the Coalition's epicenter in Cuyahoga County to a two- to three-hour radius from Youngstown to Toledo and north to Lake Erie.

The Coalition's marketing outreach to date has also been quite effective. "People are dropping off vinyl siding to be recycled," Foell explained. "And we're fielding lots of calls from other members – which is highly encouraging. We've been sharing a lot of education and best practices, and we're united in helping customers achieve landfill reduction goals by 'minimizing their pain.' We're also getting calls from local government leaders wanting to participate."

Return Polymers has played an active role so far in the Coalition, distributing its FULL-CIRCLE PVC Recycling totes at the drop-off sites, handling collections at the distribution/dealer level and contributing the resources and support from their new parent company, AZEK.

While the Coalition has gained significant traction in its first month, Foell describes their efforts so far as a "soft opening." He looks forward to seeing more exciting developments – especially the innovations and technologies that other recyclers bring to the Coalition's efforts, as well as the advances that other members will make in this collaboration. "Return Polymers has been doing recycling for 30 years, but only with rigid PVC," Foell said. "Thanks to the latest product innovations and improved technologies, recyclers like us can now use post-consumer materials to make top-quality products."

Foell says he is excited that the Coalition is bringing the broader polymer industry closer together as it can serve as a gateway to attracting other forms of PVC recycling. For the vinyl siding industry, these collaborative efforts will provide valuable data for VSI to achieve its ultimate goal – to develop a vinyl siding recycling standard and program model that other geographic regions could use.