



J+J FLOORING GROUP

DESIGNING A SOLUTION FOR ZERO WASTE-TO-LANDFILL

Imagine that you are a competitive long-distance runner. You know that the finish line is just over this last hill. As you tighten your muscles drawing the last power you have to make it up the hill, the exhaustion hits you and you are suddenly unsure if you will actually make it to the end. But you do!

That's where J+J Flooring Group, a leading manufacturer of commercial specified flooring, was just two short years ago. Not on the last leg of an actual marathon, but facing the last major hurdle in its efforts to **reduce** the company's reliance on sending waste to landfills.

MAKING SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

J+J Flooring Group was founded almost six decades ago by Tom Jones and Rollins Jolly who realized there were advantages by going into business together. The company focused on putting its people first, producing products with pride, providing value to customers and making a difference in the community – a set of values and a mission it continues to uphold today.

A milestone for the company came in the early 1990s when it created the "Green Team" comprised of employees focused on sustainable processes. Over the next 24 years, through effective **reuse, recycling and repurposing** methods, the company systematically addressed areas within its plants and office space to **reduce their impact on the environment** and significantly decreased the amount of waste the company directly sent to local landfills.

Despite all of these efforts, the team found that there was still some waste that was going to the landfill.

"That's when we made a conscious decision to find a way to get to **zero waste-to-landfill**," said Russ Delozier, Director of Sustainability, J+J Flooring Group.

NEW PARTNER WITH A SOLUTION

Delozier and his team researched possible solutions and partners to get J+J to landfill-free.

"When I visited their plant in Dalton, Ga. I was impressed," said Hugh Moore, Southeast Regional Sales Manager for Covanta. "We get a lot of calls from companies that say they are close to landfill-free but they have a lot of work still to do. That was not the case with J+J. In fact, they are the model story – they walked the walk of getting to zero waste."

"We needed to complete the cycle and we knew that something could be done with this last bit of material. We believed that it was better to get energy from it than bury it in a landfill."
Russ Delozier,
J+J Flooring Group
Director of Sustainability

Delozier and this team were equally impressed with the Covanta Huntsville, Ala. plant during their tour and the two teams agreed to work together.

But J+J had one more challenge back in Dalton before the partnership could begin. The city of Dalton has a flow controlled process for its landfills so businesses are prohibited from sending waste out of the county. The new relationship with Covanta would require J+J to transport waste not only out of the county, but across state lines.

“We had several good discussions with the local government officials,” said Delozier. “It was really about explaining how the material we were planning to move to Covanta was not ‘waste’ per se but actually ‘energy’. Eventually it worked out.”

Moore added, “Not too many businesses would take on such discussions with local governments about waste management but Russ and his team were ready for that challenge! And even though there are transportation costs associated with going to Huntsville, they are willing to do it because it takes the waste out of the landfills and allows it to be converted to energy to benefit others.”

Now any waste at J+J’s Dalton, Ga., campus that cannot be recycled, reused or repurposed – approximately two percent of its total waste – will be sent to Covanta. Since J+J started shipping materials to Covanta, they are transporting about 11 tons of waste material to Huntsville every 6-8 weeks.

Once at Huntsville, the material is sorted and then processed to make steam. The steam travels through a six-mile pipe to the Red Stone Arsenal in Huntsville providing heat and cooling to the buildings. The Redstone Arsenal, a U.S. Army garrison, services a number of tenants including the Army Materiel Command, the Missile Defense Agency of the Department of Defense and NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center.

J+J’s zero waste achievement is not just for manufacturing waste. It also includes all waste collected from the company’s Dalton administrative headquarters and manufacturing campus (more than 950,000 square feet). Waste is collected from all bathrooms, break areas, offices, conference rooms, design studios and other areas.

GOING A STEP FURTHER - CERTIFICATION

For J+J, a company that prides itself on [sustainability and green processes](#), just being able to state that they were [zero waste-to-landfill](#) was not enough.

“There’s value in a third party verification or certification of this achievement,” said Delozier. As the team soon found out, certification is not a simple task.

Third party verification is an independent audit that assesses the validity of zero waste-to-landfill claims. The process looks both at where the waste has gone in the past and the management processes in place. This second point is important: the verifier wants to make sure that a business will sustain past performance in diverting waste from landfills.

“The certification process was thorough, tough and well worth it,” said Delozier. “GreenCircle, the vendor we selected to provide the certification, looked at our material flow analysis and even spent time with our vendors and our vendors’ vendors.”

In May 2015, J+J received its official certification from GreenCircle, becoming the first commercial flooring manufacturer in the U.S. to earn this distinction. This achievement is five years ahead of the company’s initial goal of being [100 percent landfill-free by 2020](#).

“My advice for other companies on this journey – buckle up!” said Delozier. “Truly, you need to be committed to it because it’s not easy. It takes time, patience and funding. Identify a waste champion with authority to make decisions throughout the process and have a good flow diagram of your organization showing where the waste is...and ultimately it will get easier every year.”

NOT SLOWING DOWN

Not unlike the marathon runner who draws on his last bit of energy to cross the finish line breathing deeply, sore and exhausted but vowing to run the next race, J+J is not done yet.

“We still have elements of our 20/20 sustainability vision – a set of environmental performance goals we aim to achieve by 2020 – to complete,” said Delozier. “It’s a never-ending journey, but it’s an important one.”

