

# CASE STUDY

PICK YOUR PARTNERS WELL TO ACHIEVE  
ZERO WASTE-TO-LANDFILL



## PICK YOUR PARTNERS WELL TO ACHIEVE ZERO WASTE-TO-LANDFILL

The journey to zero waste-to-landfill (ZWTL) certification is neither quick nor easy. All pieces of the puzzle (leader support, employee engagement, vendor cooperation, and financial investment) need to come together at the right time.

For Superior Essex's copper communications cable manufacturing facility in Hoisington, Kansas, the journey took a decade.

"We've been certified zero waste-to-landfill for three consecutive years," said Phil Metro, Manager Distribution Services/Sustainability, Superior Essex. "It took us a long time to get here and we're committed to remaining an environmental leader for our industry."



### EARLY ACHIEVEMENTS

Superior Essex's corporate sustainability journey started 10 years ago at Hoisington. It was the employees at Hoisington who started these first sustainability efforts, according to Metro. "They identified a need to be better and that was a key factor in the ultimate success of the ZWTL program," he said. The driving force for this team was the knowledge that the site generated **four million pounds** of waste each year, and half of that waste went to the landfill.

**"We attacked the easy stuff right from the beginning,"** said Metro. **"We sorted, recycled and reused as much of the cardboard, scrap, and plastics as we could. And that got us pretty far."**

In fact, the initial efforts got the facility to **98 percent** waste diverted from the landfill, **or that's what they thought.**

"By 2014, we believed we were close – just that remaining two percent – and we'd reach the zero waste-to-landfill goal," he said. "We made a big push to get there including looking at all of our vendors and alternatives to managing the waste."

### ROADBLOCK TO MILESTONE

The team was sure they were ready in 2014 and sought certification as a zero waste-to-landfill manufacturer.

Certifiers determined that **only 89 percent** of the waste generated was actually diverted from the landfill. The downstream management organizations were not actually finding other uses for the waste, so materials were still going to the landfill. "Essentially these companies told us that they could handle our hard-to-dispose-of waste but, in reality, they didn't. They just wanted our business," said Metro.

"We learned a valuable lesson at that time," he added. "The journey to **zero waste-to-landfill** requires the right partners who are actually doing what they say they are doing with the waste. It was an important realization and one that we talk about often. Today, any company we work with goes through an extensive interview so we know where the waste is going."

**"We had the certifiers out, they reviewed everything we did, they reviewed all of our vendors, and that's where we had a problem."**

Phil Metro,  
Manager of Distribution Services &  
Sustainability,  
Superior Essex



“Once we got over that disappointment, we found new vendors. In fact, it was during this time that we were introduced to **Covanta** as a new partner - specifically for that two percent of waste that we couldn’t account for in other waste management activities,” he said.



When the certifiers returned to the Hoisington facility in 2015, the manufacturing site received zero waste-to-landfill certification, making them the first copper data cable manufacturing facility to earn this recognition. GreenCircle Certified, LLC, an independent, third-party consultant, performed the audit of hazardous and non-hazardous waste streams and verified that Hoisington was a zero waste-to-landfill facility.



The Hoisington facility’s status as a zero waste-to-landfill facility continues, having achieved recertification by GreenCircle in both 2016 and 2017.

## PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Since 2014, Superior Essex has sent approximately 10 tons of non-hazardous waste (only accounting for about two percent of the total materials outgoing from the facility) per quarter to Covanta’s Tulsa, Oklahoma Energy-from-Waste facility via trailer.

The waste consists of mixed debris, grease and wire, otherwise non-recoverable material. Once the waste arrives, it is deposited into Covanta’s high-temperature combustion system where it is destroyed at temperatures of 2,000°F, producing clean energy as a byproduct that is used to power homes and businesses in the surrounding areas.

### The Journey to Zero Waste to Landfill Status



“By leveraging Covanta’s Energy-from-Waste facility, we reached a major goal for the company and for the employees at Hoisington,” said Metro. “We continue to see great value in this partnership.”

Metro freely admits that his team’s journey to zero waste-to-landfill certification was not easy, but he likes sharing their journey with others in the industry and in the local community.

“People who work in sustainability are passionate,” he said. “We want to talk to each other and learn from each other. We’re in a great position to share our story – the good and the bad.”

While achieving certification three consecutive years brings a bit of media attention, Metro emphasized: “We took on this challenge

and live it every day - not as a marketing stunt. We believe in it. We believe it is the right thing for the environment and for our community. In fact, many of our products are designed to help customers reach their sustainability goals by contributing to green building certifications such as a Living Building Challenge and LEED v2009 and V4, and the WELL building standard.”

Superior Essex is committed to leading the industry in not only eliminating waste from landfill but reducing toxic chemistry within its products and developing technology platforms that enhance end-user wellness in the built environment. “Corporate leadership embraces this as a company culture and is expecting similar zero waste-to-landfill results from its other facilities within our division,” said Metro.