

As seen in the Ironwood, MI DAILY GLOBE 2009 PROGRESS Edition

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A Progress Report to our Communities

Iron County-Northern Highland

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Action Floor using waste wood to conserve energy

By DIANE MONTZ
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MERCER, Wis. — A \$1 million wood-burning boiler is saving money for Action Floor Systems LLC, of Mercer.

Action makes maple sports floor systems for basketball courts and other purposes. This is its 20th anniversary year in a gated manufacturing complex on U.S. 51. (See additional story in today's Progress edition.)

Plant manager Karl Anderson says the boiler demonstrates the company's commitment to a continued presence in the community.

Much of Action's equipment and inventory could be picked up and moved, Anderson noted, but the boiler — three huge pieces set in place on a concrete slab by a crane before a 30-foot-high building was constructed around it — is there to stay.

The computer-controlled, state-of-the-art boiler built in Canada replaces a 50-year-old

boiler.

Action bought that used boiler 19 years ago. It was designed to burn natural gas. A conversion to wood-burning "got us by for nearly 19 years," Anderson said.

The old boiler was inefficient, expensive and labor intensive to maintain, and it couldn't produce as much steam as Action needed to dry lumber. A backup boiler, installed in 1999, burned natural gas.

But Action produces more than enough waste wood product to burn to produce steam for drying lumber.

Even with the new boiler, the company has excess wood scrap to sell to manufacturers of wood pellets for stoves, synthetic deck materials and other products.

Action owners Tom Abendroth and Dan Corullo committed to the boiler project after a feasibility study funded in part by a Focus on Energy matching grant for \$8,662.

Focus on Energy works with Wisconsin residents and busi-

nesses to install cost effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, according to a news release. (To learn more

about Focus on Energy and its Renewable Energy Program, call 800-762-7077 or visit the Web site focusonenergy.com.)



Diane Montz/Daily Globe

A huge new wood-fired boiler at Action Floor Systems towers over plant manager Karl Anderson, left, and boiler operator Chris Fink. The manufacturer of maple sports floors at Mercer, Wis., put in the \$1 million boiler last fall to reduce its use of natural gas. Read more about the company and other businesses in today's Progress report on Iron County-Northern Highland.

The \$8,662 grant was just the start of Focus on Energy's assistance to Action Floor.

The Mercer manufacturer received a \$200,000 grant from Focus on Energy for its \$1,055,000 boiler project.

That "helped in the decision to go ahead," Anderson said. "It's a huge investment."

Concern that the old boiler would not meet emissions standards also led to the decision to buy a new boiler. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources requires a "stack test" every five years, according to Anderson. He anticipated there would be money spent before the 50-year-old boiler would meet the standards.

Anderson estimates the boiler project put \$30,000 directly into the Mercer economy. Local businesses did concrete, excavation, electrical and plumbing work.

A four-man crew came to Mercer for eight weeks to install the boiler.

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