

Rumpke recovering methane

By Joseph Szydlowski
Post staff reporter

If you took a look inside your trash can, what would you see?

Junk mail? Coffee grounds. Leftovers that were left over for far too long?

How about enough energy to power 25,000 homes a year and eliminate the greenhouse gases from burning 135.9 million gallons of gasoline?

According to Rumpke Consolidated Companies, that's how much the newly expanded gas recovery facility at its Rumpke Sanitary Landfill in Colerain Township will save annually by capturing the methane gas created naturally by decaying materials in the dump and turning it into a renewable fuel.

The \$10 million plant, which opened Monday, is the third at the massive landfill.

It's owned by Montauk Energy Capital, which owns and operates two other gas plants - built in 1986 and 1995 - at the landfill that together process nine million cubic feet of methane daily.

The new plant will process about six million cubic feet of the gas daily.

Rumpke also has gas plants at Kentucky landfills in Pendleton and Hardin counties that combine to offset the emissions of nearly 47,000 vehicles.

"We are, in fact, turning into a green society," said state Sen. Tom Niehaus, chair of the Senate's Environmental and Natural Resources Committee.

He described the plant's opening as a "milestone."

The plant uses a closed system, which should prevent odors from escaping to the surrounding neighborhood. And in the event of an emergency, the plant would burn all of the methane in a flare tower to prevent it from leaking out, according to Rick O'Mahony, Montauk director of facility development .

That means fires, natural disasters and even acts of terrorism would have little effect, O'Mahony said.

Rumpke is planning two more plants for its Colerain landfill,



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Guests at Rumpke get the chance to tour its new gas reclamation project.

IT'S A 'CLASSIC WIN-WIN' SITUATION

The plants work using a simple concept: as bacteria break down the trash in landfills, they create methane, a potent fuel source and greenhouse gas. Normally, landfills have to burn that to prevent a hazard.

But a large network of pipes driven up to 125 feet into the landfill siphon off the gas and send it to the recovery plant. There, machines remove the various contaminants, such as dirt and particulates, before compressing the methane and sending it to Duke Energy.

The facility will provide about 7 percent of Duke's natural gas supply.

"This project is a classic win-win," said Sandra Meyer, president of Duke Energy Ohio and Kentucky. She said the plant benefits the environment, because it has no emissions and its fuel is renewable, and saves on the cost of importing gas from other areas via pipeline.

but is early in the process of seeking state permits for them.

"We had to jump through 14 dozen flaming hoops to be allowed to construct the (third) plant," O'Mahony said.

Niehaus said he found it encouraging that a resource that used to be wasted is now being tapped.

"On my way south from Columbus, I see (the landfills) flaring gas, and I think, What a waste," he said. "It's good to see my trash put to good use."

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High atop "Mt. Rumpke" trash is dumped and pushed into place in the landfill. Methane gase is being recovered from the site.



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Guests view the new gas reclamation project at the Rumpke Sanitary Landfill in Colerain Township.