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Dow Chemical to test plastic waste as fuel for Midland plant

By EARTHA JANE MELZER 7/21/10 5:16 PM

DIGG TWEET

Dow Chemical will conduct a test this month to determine whether it would be possible to fuel its Midland operations with energy recovered from burning plastic.

Dow is one of the world's biggest plastic manufacturers with plastics-related business making up about 40 percent of the company's \$46.6 billion in sales last year, Frank Esposito of [Plastic News](#) reports.

Plastic is not commonly used as fuel in this country.

During the test, plastic waste of all shapes, sizes and resin types will be burned in order to recover its energy, Dow plastics sustainability leader Jeff Wooster said in a July 21 phone interview.

Waste used in the test has been provided by Dow employees, customers and partners. Most of the waste will be composed of polyethylene and polypropylene, Wooster said, and items that already are recycled commonly — such as PET and high density PE bottles and PE stretch film — won't be used in the trial.

Waste used in the trial also doesn't need to be separated into individual resin types. Dow's process will use the waste itself directly as a fuel, as opposed to pyrolysis methods, in which plastic waste is heated and converted in to a chemical liquid or fuel which is then re-used. Wooster added that Dow is working with technology partners to evaluate outside waste conversion processes as well.

Dow researchers will measure the amount of energy created by the plastic waste used in the test to see how much it would reduce Dow's use of natural gas. If the test is successful, Wooster said the next step would be to find a way to implement the process on a larger scale.

With the city of Midland already contaminated by dioxin fallout from previous manufacturing at Dow I'd like to know what steps will be taken to minimize the risk that this plastic test burn will add to the city's toxin burden.

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