

AT ISSUE

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Sustainability in Rotomoulding *What Does it Really Mean?*

In September, the ARMO rotomoulding conference in Poznan, Poland, will focus on the topic of “Sustainable Rotational Moulding”.

In our industry, the term sustainability is one of those buzzwords that is thrown around a lot and it is important for us to think about its meaning and how it applies to our business.

There are many definitions, but the one I like most is – “Sustainability is fulfilling the needs of the current generation without compromising future generations’ needs.”

How does this apply to rotomoulding?

There are many topics to discuss when it comes to sustainability, including change, carbon dioxide emissions, and NetZero.

As most rotomoulders use natural gas, the efficiency of converting this non-renewable fossil fuel into rotomoulded parts is poor. In general, the actual production of the final product consumes only 5 - 8% of the energy used by conventional machinery.

This is why our industry’s recent focus on improving energy efficiency and heating molds directly is a welcomed development.

Several rotomoulding companies are now exploring alternative energy sources, including biogas and renewable electricity, to reduce their carbon footprint.

As we begin to realize that resources are finite, the concept of reducing waste, using fewer resources, and recycling have become more and more common, and rotomoulders and their suppliers are now discussing what else can be done to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency.

In my view the third main area of focus when considering sustainability in the industry is plastic pollution. As plastic pollution in streams, rivers, and oceans continues to grow, it is evident that we are “compromising the needs of future generations” as a result. The plastic pellets and powder handlers have a major responsibility not to contribute to this problem, and everyone should take part in programs such as “Operation Clean Sweep” and do everything they can to prevent plastic from entering the environment.

Another issue that is being forced onto the agenda is the end of product life. While I was in New Zealand recently, I discovered



that some moulders had developed recycling programs for old rotomoulded junction boxes and water storage tanks.

As a company that specialises in materials for rotational moulding, we take this subject of sustainability very seriously and have several projects, mostly related to materials that we are working on in different regions of the world. Indeed, we are supporting one of our employees Jake Kelly-Walley in studying for a PhD titled “A Sustainable Approach to Materials for Advanced Rotational Moulding Applications” at the Polymer Processing Research Centre at Queen’s University in Belfast.

At the forthcoming conference in Poznan, we will be giving an update on some of the areas we’ve been working on to help reduce energy and material consumption, to develop bio-based polymers and to incorporate post-consumer and post-industrial waste into consistently performing rotomoulding materials.

We are very much looking forward to discussing and sharing ideas at this global event, which will be attended by rotomoulders from all over the world. See you in Poznan —