

Promoting the Utilization of Wood Energy in Massachusetts

West End Firewood**The Challenge**

As petroleum prices have risen over the past few years, business owners have become increasingly aware of the economic, environmental and social costs of burning fossil fuels. Since 1989, West End Firewood has produced seasoned and kiln-dried firewood products for retail customers throughout New England. Their operations consumed about 50,000 gallons of oil annually, and the price of this fuel was becoming an impossible burden for this small business.

The Solution

After a serious fire in 2006, co-owners Dwayne and Bruce Vanden Akker recognized that it was time for a change. With assistance from the Marketing and Utilization office of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the brothers assembled the material handling equipment and wood-fired boiler that enabled them to burn the residual bark, sawdust, and unmerchantable wood from the packaging operation. Today, steam from this system is fed directly into their dry kilns, and they are able to cut and process more than twenty cords of high-quality firewood daily.

West End Firewood has installed a wood-fired boiler system that is fueled entirely by onsite residues, which has completely replaced their 50,000 gallon annual fuel oil bill.

Resulting Benefits

West End Firewood is now able to satisfy all of their heating needs with an inexpensive, locally grown, carbon-neutral fuel source. In fact, the company will recoup the cost of the equipment in less than two years.



West End co-owner Dwayne Vanden Akker stands next to the fuel hopper for the new wood-fired boiler.

By reducing their consumption of fossil fuels, West End has made a small but significant contribution in reducing America's dependence upon foreign oil and in the battle against global climate change. The tremendous economic savings generated by this wood-fired boiler will help to ensure the long-term survival of this business, which will continue to provide jobs to nearby residents and local products to regional businesses. In addition, by providing a market for small-diameter trees, West End Firewood will enable foresters to better manage the local landscape for wildlife, sawtimber, and forest health.

Sharing Success

With funding from the USDA Forest Service, Wood Education and Resource Center, the Massachusetts DCR has begun an educational effort to promote the utilization of biomass energy. Companies like West End Firewood serve as real-world examples of where wood can satisfy the heating and electrical needs of businesses, institutions, and municipal facilities.



USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
 State and Private Forestry

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