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TEXON'S RECYCLABILITY PROGRAMME

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN TEXON'S PRODUCT RECYCLABILITY PROGRAMME

Texon International is the world's largest producer of footwear components, uniquely manufacturing cellulose, non-woven and metallic materials for structural component solutions. It has manufacturing facilities on 3 continents, consistently delivering quality products anywhere in the world.

Soundly managing the use of the earth's natural resources in its products is a clear part of the group's environmental policy. Texon is committed to new products that are recyclable, or containing recycled content, both cost effectively and in an environmentally acceptable way.

Texon has long operated reclamation and recycling schemes for both cellulose and non-woven materials, using in-house waste streams in manufacturing and from shoe factory waste. Major shoe manufacturers such as Nike, Adidas, Reebok, KSwiss and Wal-Mart are all pro-active partners in this work, requiring their suppliers to use recyclable materials, whilst preventing the use of AZO dyes and other restricted substances in their footwear component solutions.

Texon was the first structural component manufacturer, for example, that not only developed a 100% recycled counter material but also has the ability to take back scrap from customers and reuse it in the same product. Following two years of intensive development, the Texon scrap reclamation programme has been given a significant boost by the application of new repulping technology, which allows 100% of cellulose scrap to be reclaimed for use. The scrap includes heavily latex-saturated material which cannot be processed by conventional plant.

Texon has installed this new technology at its production facility at Russell in the USA, at an investment of US\$300,000, to help the company realise its goal of incorporating reclaimed cellulose fibre into new footwear products across the grade mix. An added benefit is that each kg of reclaimed material is one less for landfill. This has benefits to the environment and also lowers non-productive costs.

The success at the Russell facility has led to similar plant being installed in Foshan in China where it is currently being evaluated on non-woven scrap from customers' factories in China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand.

These developments follow on from the success of Texon's ReForm™ non-woven counter material that has seen the waste content of the product increased from 7% to 35% by weight without any detrimental effect on physical performance and service life. To date, over 700 tonnes of Texon ReForm scrap, returned from Asian shoe factories, have been recycled into pellets for use in the production of new Texon Reform material.

Texon Product Development Manager, Rod Fell, Foshan, China comments: "Reclamation and recycling are becoming fundamental facts of business life. It is not a question of just saving money. Natural resources are finite. We have to make them work longer and harder. Our work shows that our recycled products deliver exactly the same performance as those made from virgin materials. We believe our new technology will provide the basis for a sustainable future for the global footwear structural components industry."

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