

Iowa recycler installing auto shredder

Jul 03, 2017 | 01:09 PM | Lisa Gordon | Pittsburgh

Lakeside Auto Recyclers is entering the auto shredding arena and expects to fire up its new investment by the end of the year.

The Carter Lake, Iowa, recycler is now installing an American Pulverizer 60- by 85-inch, 2,000 horsepower shredder that is expected to generate 30 tons per hour, Mike Levell Jr., vice president told AMM.

After the ferrous is shredded and segregated in the initial processing, further processing of the nonferrous material will be conducted indoors in a fine separation building. "We like this approach because if the ferrous line breaks, you can keep running nonferrous," Levell said.

"I have been hanging around the yard since I was 3-years-old and my dream is to 'shred the world', which is our motto," he added.

The company has taken a conservative approach to growth and has just sold off a portable shredder it had been using. "In 2013, we bought portable a shredder to extract aluminum from motors and then we started running everything through it. We learned a lot about the product and got a taste of the money from the shredder upgrades," Levell said.

After visiting nearly a dozen other shredding facilities, Levell said he realized that all the big guys had hammermill machines and decided to upgrade from the 710 horsepower portable shredder. While the shredder is being constructed on the 10-acre site, it is selling its crushed cars and bales to a large recycler in Kansas City, Mo. Once the shredder is running, the company plans to ship its shredded scrap directly to mills.

The investment also includes adding a second outbound scale, fully concreting the facility and adding four additional buildings on the site.

Levell said it will be able to feed the shredder because the area generates plenty of scrap and it actively purchases vehicles including 800 in June. It has a loyal retail customer following but may go after industrial accounts once the shredder has been commissioned.



*Ready to 'shred the world'. The Levell family is upping its profile in the recycling world with the installation of a new auto shredder. Pictured left to right (back row): Debbie Peck, President & CEO Mike Levell Sr., Shane Levell, Ashley Levell, Nancy Levell, founder Butch Levell Sr., Lindy Levell, Vice President Mike Levell Jr. Front Row: Michael Levell III, Mercedes Levell and Christopher Levell.
Photo credit: Lakeside Auto Recycler, Justin Barnes*

Construction was held up for eight months after a competitor who does not operate in the town of 3,500 people unsuccessfully took legal action to stop the project. The final permit was issued at the end of May, he said in what he considers a David versus Goliath story.

"We have customers who look forward to dealing with us because we treat everyone like family. If you are thirsty, we hand you a bottle of water and if you get a flat tire, we will help you fix it. We are all about customer service," he said.

Levell said he has gained customers who are disenchanted with larger companies who are 'cold' toward its customers and make them wait too long to drop off loads.

Levell's grandfather, Butch Levell entered the business as a peddler in 1960 with a \$100 investment in a tow truck. Back then, recycling cars was a tough enterprise where vehicles were burned and then axed to recover the nonferrous.



Photo credit: Lakeside Auto Recycler, Justin Barnes

Butch Levell, who still comes to work every day, purchased the site in 1977 and put a truck scale at the site in 2000.

Levell credits the family's work ethic to his grandfather who grew up as one of eight children in a poor home that had dirt floors which needed to be raked. "My grandpa instilled the will in us to work very hard and never quit no matter what."

"It was a long road to get to this point. My dad got dropped off here by the school bus as a kid. We have even worked on Christmas," Levell said. "My dad has been here every day for 40 years and has invested his life in my dream to shred the world."

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