

## FOCUS ON ENERGY &amp; THE ENVIRONMENT

## Keen on green: Using refurbished furniture

By KATHLEEN SHANNON

Special for Lehigh Valley Business

There are segments of the economy that did not suffer in the recession that began in 2008.

In fact, one local company has doubled its sales volume since the downturn.

John Gallen of EthoSource in Morgantown, Berks County, says every year there's more and more demand for his product – refurbished office furniture systems.

Both his company and another Berks-based company, Furniture Soup, have noticed an uptick in pre-owned and refurbished furniture as business owners look to save as much as possible in furnishing their facility.

Gallen specializes in refurbished office cubicle systems by EthoSpace, designed and made by Herman Miller, and employs about 55 people at three locations. Gallen started the business in 2001 with two people in a small office.

He has established a national presence with 50 percent of his business in the Greater Lehigh Valley. Many clients are in the New York-to-Virginia corridor, but he also does business with Freedom Truck Centers in Spokane, Wash., and Westland Resources in Tucson, Ariz.

Companies that use his services may be relocating, downsizing or upgrading their offices. Customers can view offerings online, while some visit his business to get an in-person look.

EthoSource has 50,000-square-foot showrooms in Reading and King of Prussia and a 100,000-square-foot headquarters and workroom in Morgantown.

## GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

During the recession, Gallen bought furniture systems from companies that were liquidating, while companies looking to save money went to EthoSource.

## OPINION

## EPA's boiler law has March 2014 deadline for action

By PRESTON L. ROBERTS

Special for Lehigh Valley Business

The compliance deadline for the federal government's new rules on boilers is next spring, on March 21.

The new rule may affect not just manufacturers, but also hospitals, academic institutions and, potentially, school districts.

Here's a look on the new regulation.

On Feb. 1 this year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency published a final, revised regulation known as the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for Area Sources: Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional Boilers. The standard went into effect the same day.

Unofficially known as the Boiler MACT (Maximum Achievable Control Technology) Standard, this regulation applies to all oil-, coal- or biomass-fired boilers or fuel-fired process heaters and to gas-fired boilers and fuel-fired process heaters above a specific size that will use oil, coal or biomass fuels as an alternative fuel for more than 48-hours per year. Thus, dual-fuel capable boilers and



Some of the furniture products offered by EthoSource at its Reading warehouse.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ETHOSOURCE

While the driving force is saving money on a tight budget, companies also like the idea of being good to the environment and recycling existing furniture.

Customers may "blend" their purchases – a combination of new furniture with some refurbished pieces – depending on their needs.

## FLEXIBILITY, DURABILITY

EthoSpace, introduced in 1985 by Miller, has become a benchmark of the systems furniture industry. It's a frame-and-tile system with exceptional flexibility and durability.

The main structural component of an EthoSpace system is the steel framework, with tiles snapped in place for walls and surfaces. It can be simple and airy or more traditional with a strong architectural appearance.

"The furniture that's refurbished isn't old or beat up," said EthoSpace vice president of sales Bryon Kauffman. "Our designers work with customers on fabric, work surface and finish choices."

## DOUBLED IN VOLUME

Furniture Soup of Reading also offers refurbished furnishings, including those made by Miller.

Partners Brenda Gaul and Tracy McKay, both interior designers, have worked together since 2003. Sixty percent of their sales are pre-owned and refurbished systems.

Both Gaul and McKay started Furniture Soup with a strong sense of purpose. They found that most businesses lacked creative flair, considering all that's available in business furniture.

## ETHOSOURCE

- **What:** Sells new, pre-owned and refurbished office furniture.
- **Location:** 180 Grace Blvd., Morgantown; also showrooms in Reading and King of Prussia.
- **No. of employees:** 55.
- **Website:** www.ethosource.com.

## FURNITURE SOUP

- **What:** Sells new, pre-owned and refurbished office furniture.
- **Location:** 170 Corporate Drive, Reading.
- **No. of employees:** 7.
- **Website:** www.furnitureoup.com.

They wanted to remedy that, along with being good environmental stewards who didn't send used furnishings to a landfill.

"Our sales are way above what they were during the recession," Gaul said. "We've almost doubled in volume."

## DECORATIVE SERVICES

As designers, Gaul and McKay go beyond the furniture and offer a coordinated project that includes carpet and paint. If needed, they'll scout wall art for a client.

"We work with liquidators to find the items for a particular project," Gaul said.

Furniture Soup, like EthoSource, has clients throughout the nation. Most are in the New York-to-Virginia corridor.

One client is JetBlue, and Furniture Soup representatives travel to new locations in terminals across the nation to do installations.

With seven employees, Furniture Soup has an office and showroom at the Berks Corporate Center in Reading.

fuel-fired process heaters are subject to the requirements of the regulation.

## REASON BEHIND THE STANDARD

The EPA determined that certain commercial, institutional and industrial boilers and fuel-fired process heaters with a rated burner heat input larger than 10 million British Thermal Units can emit excessive amounts of certain hazardous air pollutants if not operated properly. The requirements of the new standard are intended to minimize this pollution.

Among the ways the new Boiler MACT Standard achieves its intent is by requiring owners of these boilers to:

- Conduct a one-time energy assessment.
- Develop and implement an energy management program.
- Conduct periodic boiler tuneups.

In addition, certain boilers also are subject to emission testing (mercury, carbon monoxide and, in some cases, other air pollutants.)

## QUALIFIED ENERGY ASSESSORS

If your facility has an energy management system that meets the minimum requirements of ISO 50001, then some of these requirements are waived or modified. (ISO 50001 is the new

global energy management standard that was adopted in 2011.)

Note that only qualified energy assessors may perform energy assessments. Because there is no certification for this, make certain that you know the qualifications of the assessor(s) you are considering and that the instrumentation they plan to use is appropriate to perform an energy assessment.

The EPA requires operators of boilers and process heaters to assess not just each boiler/heater, but also all downstream systems that use the steam and/or heat generated by each boiler. If your boiler or process heater has an annual heat input of:

- Less than 0.3 trillion Btu/year, then you must assess at least 50 percent of the corresponding energy end-use.
- Between 0.3 trillion and 1.0 trillion Btu/year, then you must assess at least 33 percent.
- More than 1.0 trillion Btu/year, then you must assess at least 20 percent.

## EXPERT ADVICE

If your boiler/process heater also generates electricity as part of a combined heat and power system, then in addition to the thermal assessment requirements stated above, end-

use systems receiving 30 percent or more of the electricity from the combined heat and power electrical generation system also must be assessed.

This includes, for example, lighting, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, compressed air and process systems powered from the combined heat and power systems.

EPA reporting requirements and other deadlines defined in the regulations also apply.

This new regulation is complex. A company or organization may want to seek the help of qualified professional expertise to determine if the regulation applies. If it does, then that expertise will be critical to meeting the regulation's requirements by the March 21 deadline.

*Preston L. Roberts is director of the Energy Management Institute at the Emerging Technology Applications Center at Northampton Community College. He has extensive experience in energy management systems, combined heat and power systems, investment-grade pollution prevention and energy efficiency assessments. ETAC is registered as a conservation services provider with the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission and has 19 years of experience helping companies meet state and federal air quality standards.*



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