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FALL 2026



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The Chief

By John O'Brien, Managing Editor
jobrien@paperage.com

According to the Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Paper Mill LLC, a private manufacturing enterprise that acquired Pixelle Specialty Solutions' Chillicothe mill in October 2025, has begun the process of recruiting and hiring employees in anticipation of restarting the mill and producing paper again.

The Chamber posted the announcement on its website, Sept. 23.

In the week following the announcement, which brought me to the deadline of getting this issue of PaperAge to the printer, I tried to track down further information about the restart, but didn't have much luck.

The Chamber's online post said, "Thirteen current employees have been assigned to the task of reviving the plant's 12 Paper Machine, affectionately known as 'The Chief.' The machine will be fully operational and ready to manufacture new paper by this December."

I would imagine that restarting a paper mill after a yearlong shutdown has to be a complex, capital-intensive engineering project. There's overall assessment and safety inspections, utility and infrastructure restoration, mechanical and electrical reconditioning, stock preparation and chemical systems recommissioning, and last but certainly not least, The Chief itself (or maybe himself) requires meticulous care to start-up.

At the time of this writing, that only leaves about eight weeks or so to accomplish what appears to be a great deal of work that shouldn't be performed in haste.

To provide some background on how we got to this point, Pixelle Specialty Solutions on April 15, 2025 announced plans to close the Chillicothe mill. At that time, the company stated, "The Chillicothe mill closure will allow Pixelle to strengthen its remaining operations in Spring Grove and Fremont and maintain its competitive position in the specialty paper market."

However, a few days later there was a glimmer of hope when Pixelle announced that it was in discussions with the mill's ownership group (H.I.G. Capital), government partners, and community leadership about a feasible solution, and that it would delay the closure.

But a few months later on June 10, Pixelle announced that it, along with government and community partners, explored every viable path forward with no workable result. The company then updated its WARN Act notices to mill employees, including plans to cease production at the mill by August 10, 2025.

Regardless, here we are a little over a year later with news of the Chillicothe mill and The Chief returning to operation.

Although U.S. Paper Mill hasn't said too much, Craig Teeters, who has worked at the Chillicothe mill since 1993 — holding impressive leadership roles — and since 2021 held the position of Superintendent, 12 Paper Machine, was quoted in the Chamber's notice saying, "We are incredibly proud to return The Chief to action. It has been gratifying to see the joy on our colleagues' faces and it will be a pleasure to welcome more workers into the plant as we prepare to resume paper production in Chillicothe."

All the best to Mr. Teeters, the team at the Chillicothe mill and, of course, The Chief. ■

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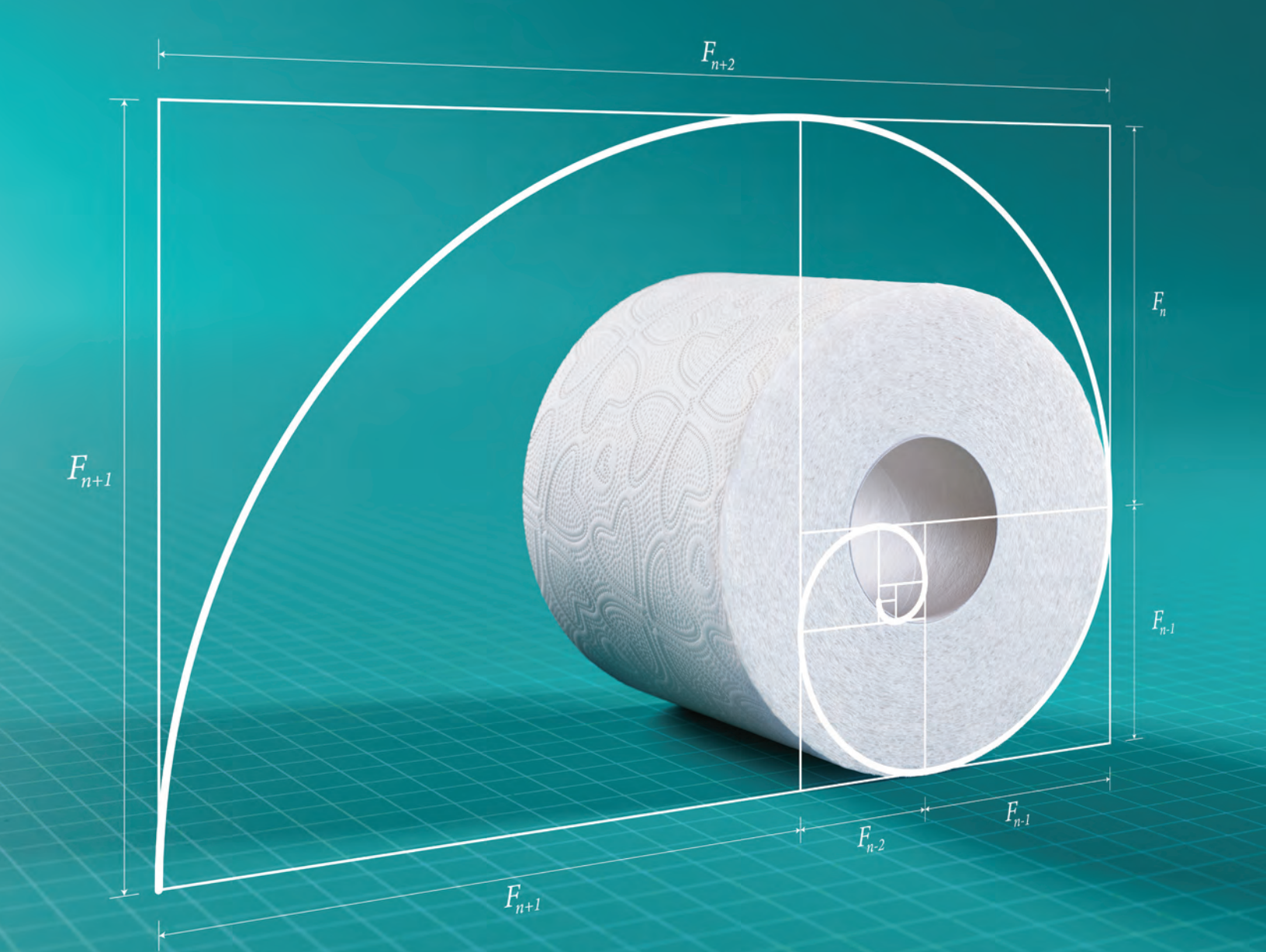
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NORTH AMERICA

Greif to Exit CRB Business, Close Sweetwater Paperboard Mill in Georgia

Greif in mid-September announced it will exit the coated recycled paperboard (CRB) market with the closure of its Sweetwater paperboard mill in Austell, Georgia. The mill is expected to cease operations by the end of 2026.

The decision is part of Greif's broader strategy to focus its resources on businesses and assets where the company has a leading market position and a clear path to long-term value creation.

Approximately 90 employees will be affected by the closure. Greif will provide severance benefits, career transition resources, and other support to help affected colleagues navigate the transition.

"This is a difficult decision because of the impact on our colleagues, their families, and the surrounding community," said President and CEO Ole Rosgaard. "Our Sweetwater team has worked hard to serve our customers and improve the performance of the mill. We are grateful for their commitment, professionalism, and many contributions to Greif."

Sweetwater produces coated recycled paperboard (CRB), uncoated recycled paperboard (URB), and gypsum facing and backing paper grades. The mill's operating configuration, limited integration within Greif's network, and cost position have prevented it from establishing a sustainable competitive position. The closure will remove approximately 120,000 tons of annual production capacity.



Greif said it is working directly with affected URB customers to support an orderly transition and continue serving them through the company's broader North American URB mill network

"We are making deliberate choices about where we compete and where we invest," said Gaylord Benner, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Sustainable Fiber Solutions "Closing Sweetwater will strengthen the overall performance of our mill network, while our investments in our URB network will direct capital toward assets that are well positioned to serve our customers and support profitable growth."

AV Group NB Temporary Idling Nackawic Dissolving Pulp Mill

AV Group NB on Sept. 17 announced the temporary idling of its pulp operations facility located in Nackawic, New Brunswick, Canada.

Av Group said the production downtime will begin around the end of October.

The mill employs approximately 350 people and has an annual production capacity of approximately 190,000 tonnes of dissolving-grade pulp.

In a press release, the company said, "The decision follows a careful assessment of the continuing challenges presented by prevailing market conditions and broader macroeconomic factors. AV Group NB will continue to monitor the market situation and business conditions and assess future scenarios for the facility."

AV Group noted that its other dissolving pulp mill, located in Atholville, New Brunswick, is not affected by this decision.

AV Group NB is a member of the Aditya Birla Group based in India.

Mercer Peace River Pulp Receives C$20 Million in Financial Support from Government of Canada

Mercer International announced that the Government of Canada, through Prairies Economic Development Canada ("PrairiesCan"), has committed C$20 million (approximately US$14 million) in financial support to its subsidiary, Mercer Peace River Pulp Ltd. ("MPR"), under the Regional Tariff Response Initiative.

The support consists of a C$1 million non-repayable contribution and a C$19 million repayable contribution, with repayment scheduled to commence in 2031, subject to the terms of the contribution agreement.

The funding provides capital to support MPR's broader transformation plan, designed to improve productivity and modernize the mill. This includes improvements to prepare the facility for the expansion of bio-energy production and carbon capture and storage. The funding builds on work already underway at the mill, including the carbon dioxide capture demonstration unit.

"This investment is an important step in the continued modernization of Mercer Peace River," stated Juan Carlos Bueno, President and CEO of Mercer. "It supports improvements to the mill's productivity and competitiveness and reflects the important role MPR plays within northern Alberta's forest products economy. I also want to recognize the work of our Peace River team in advancing these improvements."



The Peace River mill is located in the boreal forest region of Peace River, Alberta, Canada, approximately 500 km north of Edmonton. Mercer Peace River's pulp mill operations began in 1990 and produce both softwood (NBSK) and hardwood (NBHK) pulp. The majority of the mill's pulp sales are made to North American customers, while the remainder is shipped to Asian and European markets.

NORTH AMERICA

BMI Group Receives Funding for Feasibility Study on Restarting Espanola Pulp Mill

Bioveld North Inc., a subsidiary of the Canadian-owned BMI Group, on Sept. 3 welcomed a $5.1-million investment from the Government of Ontario that advances its plans to restart the Espanola pulp mill, idled since 2023.

Delivered through the Biomass Pathways Stream and Innovative Bioproduct Manufacturing and Modernization Stream of Ontario's Forest Biomass Program, the funding supports the front-end loading engineering and design that will finalize the design and cost of the restart. Bioveld North is contributing $5.4 million to the $10.5-million engineering program.

The company said the investment is an important step toward its goal of returning the mill to production. Bioveld North is not yet setting a timeline and will have more



to say as the engineering advances and the remaining pieces come together.

"This mill was never torn down or left to rot — it was kept warm, waiting," said Paul Veldman, CEO, The BMI Group. "Too much was left here for us not to look at it closely and meticulously, and Ontario's investment makes that possible. Our whole business is built on a simple idea: put wood back to work. Through our Pulp+ approach, we see Espanola capturing the full value of one of the richest forest regions in the country: premium pulp and specialty papers first, then biocarbon, renewable fuels and clean power."

The feasibility study for the restart explores returning the mill to approximately 800 air-dried metric tonnes per day of premium talc-free Northern Bleached Softwood Kraft (NBSK) pulp and about 180 short tonnes per day of paper for medical and food grades, with capacity to expand over time.

Bioveld North acquired the former Domtar site in late 2025. A successful restart will require substantial private and customer investment alongside government support, the company said.



NORTH AMERICA

Pratt Industries to Invest $97.6 Million to Construct Corrugated Packaging Plant in Iowa

The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) Board has approved tax credits for six manufacturing companies, including Pratt Industries.

According to the IEDA, Pratt plans to establish its first Iowa manufacturing facility in Bondurant to produce corrugated packaging and other corrugated products. The project includes more than $80 million in manufacturing equipment and is expected to create 105 jobs, with 20 incented at a qualifying wage of $35.11 per hour.



The $97.6 million capital investment is also expected to increase the Pratt's use of Iowa suppliers. The board awarded $1.8 million in tax credits through the BIG program, IEDA said.

The project is being undertaken by Pratt (4.0 Corrugating), LLC, a subsidiary of Pratt Corrugated Holdings, Inc., which is part of Atlanta-based Pratt Industries, Inc.

U.S. Paper Mill LLC to Restart Papermaking at Chillicothe Mill

The Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce (the "Chamber") in September announced that the former Pixelle Specialty Solutions' paper mill in Chillicothe, Ohio, will again be making paper.

According to the Chamber, U.S. Paper Mill LLC, a private manufacturing enterprise that acquired the mill in October 2025, has begun the process of recruiting and hiring new employees for paper production, prioritizing some of those who worked at the mill prior to its closure in August of 2025. Thirteen current employees have been assigned to the task of reviving the plant's 12 Paper Machine, known as "The Chief." The machine will be fully operational and ready to manufacture new paper by this December.

Since buying the Chillicothe mill, U.S. Paper Mill, a subsidiary of U.S. Medical Gloves Company, has repurposed it as a diverse jobs site for a variety of sectors, with more than 180 employees currently working on-site.

Plant Manager Craig Teeters, said, "We are incredibly proud to return The Chief



to action. It has been gratifying to see the joy on our colleagues' faces and it will be a pleasure to welcome more workers into the plant as we prepare to resume paper production in Chillicothe."

First Components for Irving Pulp & Paper's NextGen Project Arrive by Barge

The first barge carrying major components for Irving Pulp & Paper's Project NextGen successfully navigated Saint John's Reversing Falls and arrived at Lee Cove on Sept. 13 where the Irving Equipment team unloaded the components.

Project NextGen is a $1.5-billion generational upgrade to Irving Pulp & Paper's west side pulp mill in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada, and the largest investment in the Canadian forest products industry in more than 30 years.

Irving Pulp & Paper initially submitted a preliminary application to undertake Project NextGen in May of 2024.



Key funding for the project came in September 2025, when the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) reached financial close on a $660 million loan to Irving Pulp & Paper to support the large-scale modernization.

Key components of the project involve the construction of a new recovery boiler, steam turbine and green energy generator, along with the decommissioning of an oil-fired boiler.

The modernization will make the mill energy self-sufficient, eliminate the combustion of heavy fuel oil as an energy source and reduce emissions per tonne of kraft pulp by 50%.

Once complete, this project will also position the mill among the top 10 global producers of softwood kraft pulp, boosting production output by over 70%.

Irving Pulp & Paper produces softwood and hardwood grades of kraft pulp — Northern Bleached Softwood Kraft (NBSK) and Northern Bleached Hardwood Kraft (NBHK).

NORTH AMERICA

Supremex to Invest $4 Million at Three U.S. Plants

Supremex has announced capital investments totaling approximately $4 million to expand and modernize its folding carton and e-commerce packaging operations in the U.S.

The investments include the following Supremex facilities:

Indianapolis. The addition of a six-color offset press with in-line UV coating capability, complemented by advanced converting and finishing equipment at the Indianapolis packaging facility. Together, this equipment expands the range of packaging grades, formats and finishes produced in-house, adds much-needed folding carton and e-commerce packaging capacity, and reduces the company's reliance on outside subcontractors.

Chicago. The relocation and upgrade of a printing press to the Chicago envelope facility, enhancing its production capabilities.

Naperville. The addition of e-commerce packaging capacity at its Naperville, IL facility.

SOUTH AMERICA

Essity to Acquire Kenvue's Feminine Care Business in Brazil for $284 Million

Essity has entered into an agreement to acquire Kenvue's feminine care business in Brazil, including the market-leading brands Carefree, Sempre Livre and o.b. The purchase price amounts to USD 284 million on a cash and debt-free basis.

The acquisition is structured as an asset purchase from certain Kenvue subsidiaries and includes ownership of the Carefree, Sempre Livre and o.b. brands for sanitary pads, liners and tampons, as well as related manufacturing equipment in Brazil. For the twelve-month period ending June 30, 2026, the acquired business had net sales of approximately BRL 800 million with good profitability.

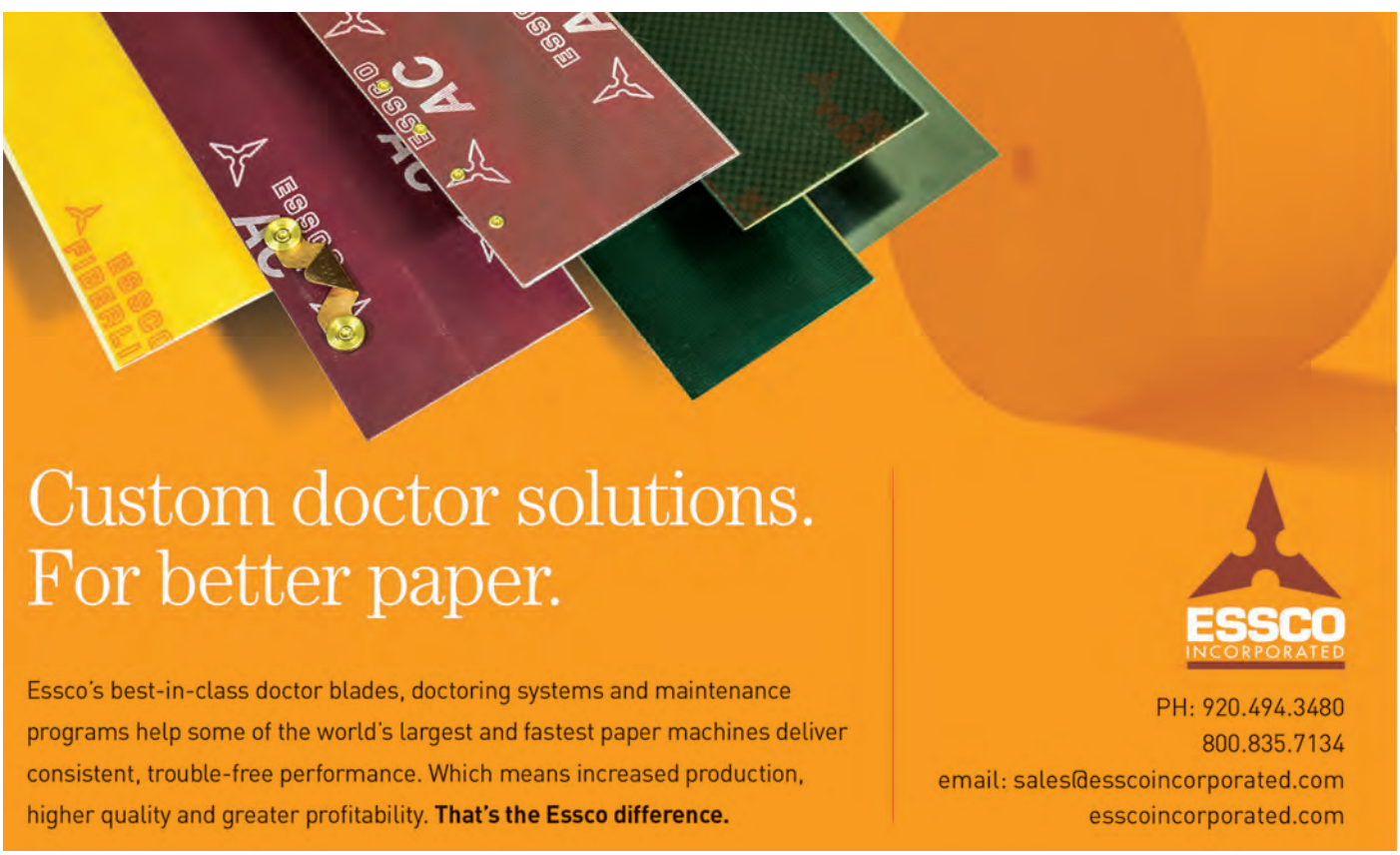
According to Essity, Brazil is one of the world's largest hygiene markets and the fourth-largest feminine care market. Essity is currently a market leader in incontinence products in Brazil with its TENA brand,



including a production facility in Jarinu, and has an established presence in the categories Professional Hygiene and Medical Solutions.

The transaction, which is subject to regulatory approval in Brazil and other closing conditions, is expected to close during the second quarter of 2027.

In February 2026, Essity completed the acquisition of the Carefree, Stayfree and o.b. brands in North America from Edgewell Personal Care.



SOUTH AMERICA

Smurfit Westrock to Acquire CMPC's Chilean Containerboard and Corrugated Business

Smurfit Westrock has entered an agreement to acquire the Chilean Containerboard and Corrugated business of Empresas CMPC S.A. for $420 million.

Smurfit Westrock intends to fund the transaction using its own liquid resources.

The deal includes one recycled containerboard mill (with a network of fiber collection centers), three corrugated plants, and one molded tray facility.

In a press release, the Smurfit Westrock said, "We believe the business is highly complementary to our existing operations and provides an excellent platform from which to continue growing alongside our customers in Latin America.

"These assets are strategically located close to the country's key fishery and agricultural regions, complementing our existing corrugated business and represent, for Smurfit Westrock, the opportunity to acquire one of the leading positions in containerboard and corrugated in Chile.



"The well-invested paper machine, located in Santiago, produces approximately 250,000 tons per year and will strengthen our regional paper system. It will allow us to integrate recycled paper into our operations in Argentina, Peru, and Ecuador, while also enabling us to route kraftliner from Brazil and North America into the acquired corrugated assets in Chile."

Tony Smurfit, President and CEO, said, "Opportunities to acquire a truly unique business like this one are rare. CMPC has nurtured and grown this business over many decades and brings tremendous expertise into the Smurfit Westrock organization. With both the extensive industry knowledge and geographic footprint that Smurfit Westrock brings to our new colleagues, I am very excited about future opportunities for growth and development across the region. I am equally pleased to expand our presence in the Chilean market which, over decades, has shown strong growth and resilience."

Smurfit Westrock expects to complete the acquisition during the first half of 2027, subject to customary closing conditions, including regulatory approvals.

Suzano to Acquire Stake in Imetame's Greenfield Port Project in Aracruz

Suzano has entered into an agreement with Imetame Group to acquire a 10% equity stake in Imetame Logística Porto, the company responsible for developing a greenfield port project currently under construction in the municipality of Aracruz, Espírito Santo, Brazil.



Imetame Group is a Brazilian business group headquartered in Aracruz.

Suzano's 10% equity stake will be acquired through the contribution of land owned by Suzano — strategically located for the development of the project — without affecting the operational or economic performance of Suzano's Aracruz pulp mill, which is located in the same region.

The greenfield project includes the development of five specialized terminals — containers, general cargo, dry bulk, liquid bulk, and ship-to-ship operations.

The container terminal, a joint venture with Hanseatic Global Terminals (HGT), Hapag-Lloyd's terminals division and part of the world's fifth-largest container shipping line, is expected to be operational by mid-2028. The other four terminals will be developed in subsequent phases, in line with the port's construction schedule.

With a draft of 17 meters, 750 meters of quay length and state of the art container handling equipment, the new facility will have an annual capacity of approximately 1.2 million TEU.

EUROPE

Metsä Group's Proposed Carbon Dioxide Capture Plant Receives EUR 21 Million in Aid

Metsä Group's planned wood-based carbon dioxide capture plant in Rauma has been awarded EUR 21 million in aid through the reverse auction organized by Finland's Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

In addition to supporting climate change mitigation, carbon dioxide capture would create new business opportunities.



"Receiving this aid is one of the key prerequisites for making the investment," said Maria Mroué, VP, Communications and Brand, Metsä Group. "We are talking about building an entirely new industrial value chain in a market that is only beginning to take shape. The positive decision means that we can continue planning the plant."

In Metsä Group's project, carbon dioxide would be captured from the flue gases of the recovery boiler at the Rauma pulp mill.

The final investment decision can be considered at the beginning of 2027 at the earliest. In addition to the aid, the investment decision is subject to obtaining an environmental permit, completing the engineering of the capture plant, and securing sufficient market demand.

The aid will only be paid if the investment is carried out, Metsä noted.

The planned carbon capture capacity in Rauma would be 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. Metsä Group's customers would use the captured carbon dioxide in the production of e-fuels.



EUROPE

MM Group to Acquire Arnsberg Recycled Cartonboard Mill from RDM

MM Board & Paper (MM) has signed an agreement with the Reno De Medici (RDM) Group to acquire the operating business of RDM's Arnsberg recycled cartonboard mill in Germany through an asset deal.

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The Arnsberg mill has an annual production capacity of about 230,000 tonnes per year of recycled cartonboard with a focus on liner products.

The transaction represents an investment in MM's core business and complements its existing production network.



In a press release, MM said, "By integrating the Arnsberg mill into its established industrial platform in Germany, comprising several cartonboard mills and packaging plants, MM expects to realize significant synergies that should facilitate the turnaround of the mill.

"In addition, the acquisition is expected to increase production flexibility, improve security of supply, and further broaden the product and service offering for customers," the company said.

All employees at the Arnsberg mill will be transferred to MM.

Completion of the deal, which is expected in the fourth quarter of 2026, remains subject to approvals from antitrust regulators.

INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS

Valmet to Deliver First Commercial-Scale 3D Molded Fiber Line to Metsä's Äänekoski Mill

Valmet will deliver a 3D Fiber molded fiber production line to Metsä Group's bioproducts mill in Äänekoski, Finland. The investment marks a significant milestone as the world's first commercial-scale implementation of the innovation. It follows Valmet's extensive development, piloting, and the successful launch of the 3D Fiber technology in June 2026.

Valmet and Metsä Group have been developing the novel technology together in their demo plant in Äänekoski.

"Valmet 3D Fiber technology is the first large-scale molded fiber production technology on the market, and it provides an attractive and competitive end-to-end solution for the growing sustainable packaging market," said Juho Pyrrö, Head of 3D Fiber at Valmet.

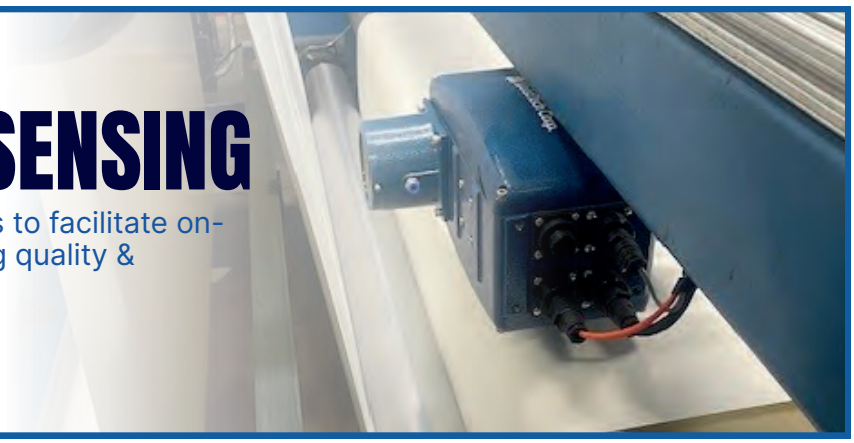
Valmet 3D Fiber technology enables the production of lightweight yet rigid end products, including trays, plates, and food packaging containers, offering alternatives to plastic. The technology uses cellulose fibers to form ready-to-use, three-dimensional products directly from pulp, eliminating the need for intermediate steps.

The new production line will be located alongside the existing demo plant with a nominal capacity of more than 100 million products per year, demonstrating the scalability of the technology and paving the way for future industrial investments.



Start-up of the line is scheduled for 2028.

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INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS

Voith Starts-Up PM 47 at Sun Paper's Yanzhou Mill in China

Voith has successfully started up PM 47, a new packaging paper machine supplied to Sun Paper at its Yanzhou production site in Shandong Province, China. With a wire width of 8.66 meters and an annual design capacity of 700,000 tons, PM 47 achieved its maximum operating speed of 1,400 m/min only 10 days after start-up.

The project progressed from civil construction to first reel in just 11 months and 8 days.

"The PM 47 project has set a new record for wide, high-speed packaging paper machines of this type," said Ying Guangdong, Deputy General Manager and Chief Engineer, Sun Paper Co. "This success was driven by the strong collaboration between both teams,



who worked in parallel shifts throughout installation and commissioning with around-the-clock responsiveness."

Voith delivered PM 47 as a full-line supplier. The scope of delivery included the OCC stock preparation system, the UKP virgin fiber system, wet-end process systems, the paper machine from head-box to reel, as well as automation and digitalization technologies.

A key component of the project is the OCC line, designed for a capacity of 2,200 tons per day.

The production line is equipped with Voith's advanced automation and digital solutions, including MCS, QCS, OnCare. CM and MillOne, covering process control, quality management, condition monitoring and production data management.

In addition, permanent magnet motor technology has been extensively applied throughout the stock preparation process, helping reduce energy consumption and further improve operational efficiency.



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INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS

Kadant to Supply OCC System for Sun Paper in China

Kadant Fiberline (China) Co., a subsidiary of Kadant Inc., was recently awarded an order for an OCC system for Sun Paper at its facility in Guangxi, China.

The PM21 OCC system is scheduled to start up in 2027 and will have a capacity of 1,600 BDMT per day. Equipped with innovative full-line permanent magnet motor technology, the system will deliver exceptional energy efficiency and performance.

"It is our great pleasure to partner with Sun Paper once again," said Peter Ma, Vice President Sales and Marketing at Kadant Fiberline China. "Drawing on our three decades of close strategic cooperation, this project reflects our shared commitment to delivering high-quality fiber processing solutions for Sun Paper's continued growth in southern China."



Burgess Pigment Acquires Thiele Kaolin in Sandersville, Georgia

Burgess Pigment Co., a producer of specialty kaolin pigments and functional mineral products, recently completed its acquisition of Thiele Kaolin Company, a global supplier of high-quality kaolin clay and silica products.

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Founded in 1946 and headquartered in Sandersville, Georgia, Thiele is recognized for its mining and processing operations, broad product portfolio, and long-standing customer relationships across paper, packaging, coatings, construction materials, and other industrial applications.

"Our acquisition of Thiele aligns closely with our long-term strategy to build a vertically integrated and differentiated specialty minerals platform," said Sandy Burgess, President of Burgess Pigment. "Together, we will be better positioned to meet customer demand for consistent supply and to offer a broader range of high-performance solutions, while continuing to invest in our people, operations, and innovation capabilities."

Mr. Burgess will continue as CEO and President of Burgess Pigment. Eric Tillirson will continue to serve as President of Thiele.

How Haber's Mt. Fuji Turns Mill Data into Evidence-Backed Recommendations

Haber's industrial AI helps mill teams see what is changing, understand what is driving it and evaluate the action being recommended.

Pulp and paper mills are trying to adopt AI-enabled process control to reduce variability, control energy and chemical costs, and maintain more consistent product quality. But a recommendation creates value only when the operators and engineers responsible for the process can understand how it was reached and determine whether it makes sense under current mill conditions, in short, create trust. Until then, these recommendations merely show up on a screen. Haber's Mt. Fuji is designed around this.

The industrial AI platform, Mt. Fuji, works with a mill's existing data infrastructure and analyzes how interacting process variables affect a defined performance target, such as freeness, brightness, quality variability, chemical consumption or energy use.

When Mt. Fuji identifies a developing deviation or improvement opportunity, it does more than issue an alert or suggest a new setpoint. It presents the current and predicted performance of the target KPI, highlights the influencing parameters, recommends an action and shows its expected effect on quality or resource consumption. The reason, confidence and applicable operating guardrails allow mill personnel to understand why the recommendation is being made.

Operators and engineers can then assess the recommendation before accepting or modifying it. Mt. Fuji can subsequently monitor the process response, helping the team verify whether the intervention delivered the expected result. This creates a transparent path from process data to prediction, recommendation and measured outcome.



Predictive refining control in practice

At a specialty paper mill, refining decisions depended on periodic laboratory freeness measurements. With more than 20 grades running on a single refiner, the operating condition represented by a result could already have changed before the next adjustment was made. Operators were making more than 100 manual refiner adjustments per week, contributing to overshooting, undershooting and unnecessary refining-energy consumption.

Haber deployed Mt. Fuji to map the process variables affecting refining, including specific energy, edge load, consistency and flow. The platform used continuously available process data and laboratory results to predict freeness between measurements. It then recommended adjustments to refiner load before freeness moved away from target.

Crucially, the recommendation was connected to the evidence behind it. Mill personnel could review the predicted freeness, the contributing process variables and the expected result of the proposed adjustment before deciding whether to act.

Results from the 90-day study

Over the 90-day study, the mill reduced specific refining energy by 10.5% and freeness variability by 30%, while maintaining stable refining performance across more than 20 grades. For mills, trusted AI is not simply a model that produces predictions. It is a system that makes the basis of its recommendations visible and helps people take earlier, better-informed action within real process constraints.

Talk to Haber about where Mt. Fuji could deliver evidence-backed recommendations for quality, energy or process stability in your mill. You can reach out via email (sales@haberwater.com), website (www.haberwater.com) or LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/company/haber-tech/posts). ■

PAPER


Tatiana Berardinelli

- *Graphic Packaging Holding Company* announced that **Tatiana Berardinelli** has been appointed Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, effective Sept. 8. She joined Graphic Packaging from Multi-Color Corporation where she served as Chief Human Resources Officer.

- *Metsä Tissue* has appointed **Michael Lanschützer** as SVP, Greaseproof Papers, effective Oct. 5. Lanschützer brings extensive experience from the paper and packaging industry. He joins Metsä from Mondi, where he most recently served as Managing Director for Mondi Jülich, a specialty papers converting plant in Germany.

- *Sonoco* has appointed **Francesco Giannolo** as Vice President and General Manager of Sonoco Consumer Packaging, EMEA. Giannolo joined Sonoco in 2019 and prior to this new appointment held the position of Vice President of Commercial for Sonoco's Consumer Packaging EMEA/APAC business.


Niclas Rosenlew

- *Stora Enso* has appointed **Niclas Rosenlew**, currently Chief Financial Officer, as Deputy CEO. Alongside his current responsibilities as a member of Stora Enso's Group Leadership Team, Rosenlew will serve as deputy to President and CEO Hans Sohlström.

INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS

- *AstenJohnson* announced the appointment of **Maggie Bidlingmaier** as President and Chief Executive Officer, effective Sept. 28. She succeeds **Kevin Frank**, who will retire at the end of this year and steps down from his current role on Sept. 28. He will remain with AstenJohnson through December 31 to support a seamless transition. Previously, Bidlingmaier served as Executive Vice President and President of the Americas at Graphic Packaging International.


Maggie Bidlingmaier


Randy Hand

- *Atlanta Gear Works* announced that **Randy Hand** has joined the company as Director of Field Services. Hand brings more than 25 years of maintenance, reliability and field service leadership experience. Before joining AGW, he served as Maintenance & Reliability Director for Graphic Packaging International.


Michael C. Colwell

- *Kadant Inc* has appointed **Michael C. Colwell** as President and Chief Operating Officer, effective Oct. 1 and President, CEO and a Director, effective Jan. 2, 2027, as part of a succession plan. As part of the plan, **Jeffrey L. Powell** will continue to serve as President through Sept. 30, 2026, and CEO through Jan. 2, 2027, at which time he will become Executive Chairman. **Jonathan W. Painter**, Kadant's current Chairman, will cease to serve as a director and Chairman on Jan. 2, 2027.


Jim Lieskovan

- *Nationwide Boiler* appointed **Jim Lieskovan** as President, effective Aug. 1. He succeeds **Larry Day**, who has served as Nationwide Boiler's President and CEO since 2016 and will continue in his role as CEO through his retirement in Jan. 2027. Lieskovan previously held the position of Vice President of Sales at the company.


Ken Stager

- *Röchling Industrial Kimberly* in Wisconsin announced the appointment of **Ken Stager** as its new Managing Director. He succeeds **Dave Brown**, who led Röchling Industrial Kimberly for 26 years. Stager is a recognized expert in the U.S. pulp and paper industry. He has spent his entire career in the sector, gaining hands-on experience at paper machines, specializing in dewatering technology and later taking on senior responsibilities in project business for the North American market.


Max Luedtke

- *Valmet* has appointed **Max Luedtke** as Executive Vice President, Pulp, Energy and Circularity business area and a member of Valmet's Executive Leadership Team. He replaces **Sami Riekkola**, who will remain with the company until the end of October to help with the transition. Luedtke previously worked at ABB, where he most recently served as Business Line Manager, Mining & Mineral Processing.

NOVEMBER 2-3, 2026
Tissue Summit North America
Nexum Group
Hyatt Regency Green Bay
Green Bay, Wisconsin, USA
tissuesummitnorthamerica.com

NOVEMBER 2-4, 2026
Forest Products North America and International Containerboard Conference
Fastmarkets
Westin Chicago River North
Chicago, Illinois, USA
www.fastmarkets.com

NOVEMBER 11-12, 2026
Paper & Tissue Show London
Alfurat Group
Excel London
London, England
london.paperoneshow.net

2027
JANUARY 16-18, 2027
TAPPI-PIMA Student Summit
TAPPI
Raleigh Marriott City Center
Raleigh, North Carolina, USA
tappistudentsummit.org

JANUARY 19-21, 2027
2027 Paper Distribution Conference
NPTA (National Paper Trade Association)
Ritz Carlton Golf Resort
Naples, Florida, USA
www.gonpta.com

FEBRUARY 3-4, 2027
PPC Technical Production Exchange
Paperboard Packaging Council
Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA
paperbox.org

FEBRUARY 25, 2027
Converters Expo South
BNP Media Packaging Group
Charlotte Convention Center
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA
www.packagingstrategies.com/converters-expo-south

MARCH 1-3, 2027
Fastmarkets Forest Products Europe Conference 2027
Fastmarkets
Postillion Hotel & Convention Centre Amsterdam
Amsterdam, Netherlands
www.fastmarkets.com

April 5-7, 2027
BLRBAC Spring 2027 Meeting
Black Liquor Recovery Boiler Advisor Committee
HILTON Atlanta Airport
Hapeville, Georgia, USA
blrbac.net

APRIL 5-7, 2027
AICC 2027 Spring Meeting
The Independent Packaging Assoc.
Doral, Florida, USA
www.aiccbox.org

APRIL 7-9, 2027
Tissue World Lisbon
Informa
Feira Internacional Lisboa
Lisbon, Portugal
www.tissueworld.com/lisbon

MAY 4-6, 2027
Paper Meets Live! 2027
AF&PA and NPTA
Opal Sands Resort
Clearwater Beach, Florida, USA
www.afandpa.org





Paper Access Is a Manufacturing Issue

By Heidi Brock, President and CEO, American Forest & Paper Association

Paper manufacturers understand change. Our industry has adapted in the U.S. for generations — investing in new products, new technologies, mill modernization, and new ways to serve customers. But adaptation should not mean accepting an erosion of paper access in the essential communications Americans rely on every day.

Across the marketplace, and increasingly in Washington, important information is being pushed toward digital-first delivery. Bills, statements, notices, disclosures and health benefit documents that once arrived by mail are being moved to electronic delivery by default. For some Americans, that may be convenient. But for many others, paper remains the most reliable and trusted way to receive, review and retain information that affects their finances, health benefits and daily lives.

A mailed document does not require a password, a portal, a broadband connection or a screen. It can be opened, saved, shared with a family member or brought to a trusted advisor. It gives people a durable record in a world where important emails can be missed, filtered or deleted.

Our industry is highly customer focused. We know that communications are evolving, and many people prefer electronic delivery. The question is whether progress expands reliable access or quietly narrows it. Americans should not have to work harder to keep receiving paper when the information involved is theirs, and too important to miss.



Our industry is not asking anyone to reject digital tools. We are asking for a clear understanding of what paper still provides: reliable access, a durable record and a communications option that continues to serve millions of Americans well.

This is not confined to one company, one agency or one proposal. It is part of a broader drift toward systems that treat digital delivery as the default and paper as the exception. Recent proposals from the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Department of Labor are examples of that larger trend of unilaterally moving information delivery to digital by default. As these issues move through Washington and the marketplace, the larger question is: are we making information easier to access, or making paper harder to receive?

That question matters for millions of people who depend on paper. It also matters for the manufacturers who make paper-based communications possible. This value chain includes mills, printers, envelope manufacturers, mail service providers, transportation networks, suppliers, distributors, and local businesses.

These are real jobs in real communities, supported by demand that can be affected by decisions made far from the mill floor.

No single decision tells the whole story. But repeated decisions that make paper harder to access can add cumulative pressure to a manufacturing network already managing global competition, rising costs, shifting demand and an increasingly complex policy environment.

That is why this debate deserves a wider lens. A move to digital-first delivery can look like a simple efficiency measure. But when similar decisions are repeated across companies, agencies and regulated markets, the effect is not isolated. Over time, those choices can weaken demand, discourage investment and place added strain on the domestic value chain that makes trusted paper communications possible. Forced electronic delivery as the default is not an adequate substitute for informed, affirmative consent to receive important information in that format.

Our industry is not asking anyone to reject digital tools. We are asking for a clear understanding of what paper still provides: reliable access, a durable record and a communications option that continues to serve millions of Americans well.

Modernization should not depend on making paper less available to the people who use it. It should give Americans more dependable ways to receive important information, not remove one that continues to work. And it should strengthen, not strain, the manufacturing base that helps make those communications possible.

The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) serves to advance public policies that foster economic growth, job creation and global competitiveness for a vital sector that makes the essential paper and packaging products Americans use every day. The U.S. forest products industry employs more than 925,000 people, largely in rural America, and is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 44 states. Our industry accounts for approximately 4.7% of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP, manufacturing more than $435 billion in products annually.

AF&PA member companies are significant producers and users of renewable biomass energy and are committed to making sustainable products for a sustainable future through the industry's decades-long initiative — Better Practices, Better Planet 2030. ■



Klabin's PM 28: Flexible Board Production on a Large Scale



Advanced stock preparation and board machine technologies support a new era of flexibility and performance.

In 2023, Klabin's PM 28 board machine was successfully started up at the company's Ortigueira mill in Paraná, Brazil, marking a major milestone in the second phase of the company's ambitious Puma II Project. Designed for flexibility and scale, PM 28 is capable of producing a wide range of coated and uncoated board grades. Valmet's advanced stock preparation and board machine technologies played an important role in supporting Klabin's goals — enhancing energy efficiency, ensuring fiber quality, and delivering the process stability needed to meet evolving market demands.

Klabin's Puma II Project's first phase included the installation of a new kraftliner machine at Ortigueira, PM 27, with the capacity to produce 450,000 tons per year of 100% kraftliner paper from eucalyptus fiber (Eukaliner®). PM 27 started-up in August of 2021.

PM 28 was installed as part of the second phase of Puma II. The board machine is designed to be flexible, capable of meeting market demands and adapting to volatility. It can produce a large variety of board grades, from kraftliner to coated boards such as folding box boards (FBB) and liquid packaging boards (LPB). With an annual capacity of 460,000 tonnes, it's the largest board machine in Latin America.



13 Valmet Conical Refiner Pro units provide a highly efficient and fiber-friendly refining process.

Valmet delivered equipment for stock preparation and approach flow systems and board making line from headboxes to reel, followed by a winder with automated transfer rails and roll handling systems.

PM 28 is integrated with a new fiber line that includes a Continuous Cooking G3 system and a BCTMP line. The Valmet-supplied fiber line was also a part of the second phase of Puma II Project together with extensive automation and digital services.

Efficient Fiber Treatment with Comprehensive Stock Preparation

As part of the Klabin Puma II Project, Valmet delivered a comprehensive stock preparation line and approach flow system for PM 28, tailored to meet high demands for energy efficiency, process performance, and product quality.

Key components of the stock preparation line are the 13 Valmet Conical Refiner Pro units, which provide a highly efficient and fiber-friendly refining process. Klabin had already gained positive experience with this technology during their previous project with PM 27, where the refiners delivered excellent results in terms of fiber treatment and paper quality. Compared to traditional systems, these refiners enable more uniform fiber treatment and improved control over energy input, especially with their low no-load power consumption. This translates into better paper properties, including enhanced tensile strength, burst, and tear resistance, critical for kraft and board grades.

Another important element of the delivery is the Valmet Disc Filter, which plays a vital role in water and fiber management. Installed to treat white water from the machine, the disc filter enables the recovery of valuable fibers that would otherwise be lost to the effluent system. The cleaned water is then reused in the shower systems and other parts of the machine, reducing the need for fresh water intake. This



Valmet Disc Filter plays a vital role in water and fiber management.



PM 28 Wet End. The OptiPress Linear with three shoe presses plays a crucial role in maintaining high dewatering capacity, excellent runnability, and outstanding end-product properties.

contributes to lower raw material costs and improved environmental performance, making the disc filter an essential part of the mill's circular approach to water and fiber use.

Klabin's Puma II Project Delivers Flexibility and Performance

From start-up success to optimized performance, Klabin's Puma II Project showcases how integrated fiberline, BCTMP and automated technologies can create a flexible and efficient board production platform.

Excellent Quality and CD Profiles with Advanced Technologies

PM 28 is equipped with three OptiFlo Fourdrinier headboxes and an OptiFormer Multi forming section with three fourdriniers that ensure uniform paper formation. The stand-out feature is the state-of-the-art middle ply OptiFlo Fourdrinier headbox. This headbox, equipped with an ejector-type dilution system, features CD profile control with a new 30-millimeter spacing. It effectively eliminates even the smallest error wavelengths of 6 centimeters or more. With this narrow spacing, Valmet now offers options of 30 mm, 60 mm, and 90 mm spacing, ensuring the best dilution control for each specific case.

Klabin has been very pleased with the narrow dilution spacing. "You have fiber orientation adjustments, and now this new dilution control," said Wagner Ouverney Santos, Production Paper Manager at Klabin. "We have seen superior quality and CD profiles in the middle ply, thanks to the advanced headbox technology and this new narrow dilution spacing."

The OptiPress Linear with three shoe presses plays a crucial role in maintaining bulk and densifying the paper web. Other highlights include the OptiSizer Film sizer technology and two OptiCoat Jet coating stations, which ensure uniform coating application, essential for achieving the highest quality of board.

Training and Optimizing with Digital Services

PM 28's start-up and optimization were supported by a comprehensive package of Valmet's digital services. One absolute highlight is the Valmet Training Simulator, which enables personnel to safely practice hands-on procedures and scenarios and prepare them for troubleshooting.

PM 27 and PM 28 in Ortigueira are the first board machines in the world with a fully simulated process.

Anderson Tomé, Industrial Manager



Valmet's advanced controls and levels of automation allow for complex optimizations. The technology used enables precise control over plant structures and fiber morphology, along with a strategic approach to impregnation and refining processes.

at Klabin, explained, "The knowledge acquired through the simulation trainings help the operators in day-to-day tasks. There is huge impact as the operator gains confidence and composure. With acquired knowhow and experience, they become adept and effective at handling diverse situations and anticipating machine behavior.

"We also saw an important gain in adjusting the logics and parameters, which had a clear positive impact on the start-up curve," he added.

Another highlight has been the Advanced Process Controls (APC), which optimize the board and paper quality and raw material usage. Instead of controlling individual equipment, the APC is taking over multiple process areas and machine sections. Klabin's experiences with the APC have been very positive.

The third highlight is an automatic customer roll handling tracking system, which connects PM 28 to the new warehouse. This process is supported by an innovative radio frequency identification (RFID) tagging control system that enables traceability of the produced paper. In practice, the RFID tag is in the core and can be digitally read through the thick paper roll.

Previously, operators had challenges visually locating the exact place of customer rolls in the warehouse. Today, forklifts equipped with RFID readers and smart software algorithms monitor all roll movements. The system can pinpoint the exact location of all rolls in the warehouse and manage the loading of all outbound orders, registering each shipped item and its destination.

Collaboration at the Core

The successful collaboration between Klabin and Valmet in the Puma II Project exemplifies the power of strategic partnership and shared innovation. By integrating advanced stock preparation systems, cutting-edge board machine technologies, and comprehensive automation solutions, the teams have delivered a highly flexible and sustainable production line.

PM 28, complemented by the new fiberline and BCTMP line, enables Klabin to produce a diverse range of high-quality board grades, including kraftliner, folding box board, and liquid packaging board, which enhances their market adaptability and product portfolio.

Reflecting on the project's development, Ricardo Cardoso, Industrial Director at Klabin, concluded, "The development of the project was like a co-creation between Klabin and Valmet so that we could have the best possible execution of the project. Through our joint effort, we achieved excellent results and gained our customers' approval for our products. We are very happy with the results achieved so far." ■

Closing the Quality Gap in Carton and Board with Moisture Measurement

By Sarah Hammond, MoistTech Corp.



When moisture is continuously monitored, it shifts from an intermittent quality check to a controllable process variable that directly affects strength, print quality, and waste across carton and board operations.

Quality in carton and paperboard converting cannot rely solely on periodic checks. Moisture is a continuous variable, and paper moisture measurement provides continuous visibility that determines how efficiently material runs and how reliably finished packaging performs.

At a high level, the converting process moves the paper web or board stock from drying and conditioning through printing, coating, and forming. At each stage, moisture influences how the sheet behaves during transportation, processing, and finishing. Small changes early in the process can carry through the entire line, creating defects that impact operators, quality teams, and brand owners.

When moisture is continuously monitored, it shifts from an intermittent quality check to a controllable process variable that directly affects strength, print quality, and waste across carton and board operations.

How Moisture Impacts Converting Performance

Paperboard moisture content influences nearly every critical property of paper and board. Small variations can quickly create large downstream problems.

When sheets or webs are too wet, they are more prone to stretch, curl, and dimensional instability. This often leads to misregistration, wrinkling, and web breaks during printing or converting.

When materials are too dry, the opposite set of issues appears. Converters may experience brittleness, cracking at score lines, poor fold performance, and inconsistent adhesion during carton forming or laminating.

In both cases, variability in moisture erodes converting efficiency and threatens the performance and appearance standards that brand owners expect.

The Limitations of Traditional Moisture Checks

Many operations still rely on lab sampling or operator judgment at discrete points in the process. While these methods provide insight, they are inherently reactive.

By the time an off-spec condition is identified, multiple rolls or stacks may already be compromised. This leads to rework, a downgraded product, or scrap.

Without real-time visibility, it is difficult to catch trends early or make adjustments before issues impact production.

Moving to Continuous Moisture Measurement

Continuous, inline paper moisture measurement changes how converters manage quality. Instead of relying on snapshots, operators gain a real-time view of moisture trends across the process. This allows teams to make immediate adjustments before variability shows up as defects at the printer, coater, or folder-gluer.

With better visibility, moisture becomes something that can be actively managed, not just inspected after the fact.

Why NIR Technology Is Changing the Equation

Modern near-infrared (NIR) sensing enables accurate, non-contact moisture measurement directly on the moving web, functioning as a highly precise moisture meter for paper and cardboard.

NIR sensors can be mounted inline to deliver instant, continuous readings without interrupting production. Because the measurement is non-contact, there is no risk of damaging the product or slowing the line.

Advanced systems are designed to remain stable even when basis weight, color, or surface characteristics change. This reduces the need for frequent recalibration and helps maintain consistent accuracy over time.

Strategic sensor placement is key. Installing sensors near the end of drying, before rewinding, or at the infeed to a converting or printing line provides immediate feedback where it matters most. This allows operators to optimize dryer settings, balance moisture profiles, and protect critical downstream processes.

Operational Benefits Beyond Quality

The impact of tighter moisture measurement extends beyond product quality, influencing how efficiently lines run, how consistently material performs, and how much waste is generated across the operation.

- Improve runnability
- Reduce unplanned stops
- Support higher line speeds
- Reduce troubleshooting on press and at the folder-gluer
- Minimize manual inspection

Over time, the data collected from continuous measurement becomes a valuable resource. Teams can analyze trends across grades, shifts, and machines to standardize best practices, support quality certifications, and strengthen collaboration with board suppliers through clear, data-driven feedback on incoming material.

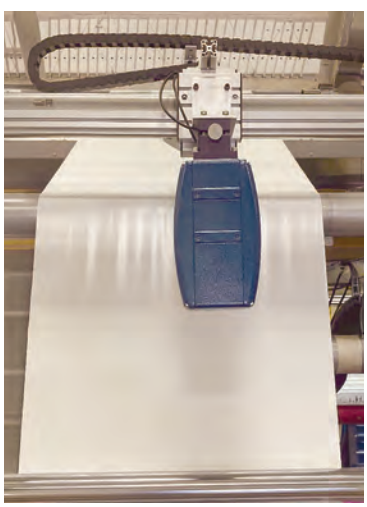


Modern near-infrared (NIR) sensing enables accurate, non-contact moisture measurement directly on the moving web, functioning as a highly precise moisture meter for paper and cardboard.

Closing the Quality Gap

As performance expectations increase across the packaging industry, converters need tighter control over every process variable that affects quality and efficiency.

Moisture is one of the most influential variables, yet it is often under managed. Continuous paper moisture measurement is a strategic tool for closing the quality gap in carton and board converting.



NIR sensors can be mounted inline to deliver instant, continuous readings without interrupting production.

MoistTech's near-infrared moisture measurement solutions, including the IR-3000 Series, provide continuous, inline visibility to reduce variability, minimize waste, and improve overall process stability. With real-time data and no-drift performance, teams can make faster adjustments, maintain consistent quality, and run more efficient operations. ■

Sarah Hammond is the Marketing Manager for MoistTech Corp. She can be reached by email at: shammond@moisttech.com.

Overcoming Premature Conveyor Belt Failure in Pulp and Paper Mills

Selecting the correct belt application is key to keeping your mill's conveyance system running smoothly.

By Raymond Borup and Michael Dal Porto, Motion Conveyance Solutions

For conveyor systems in the wood, pulp, and paper industry, selecting the correct belt for your application is crucial to the durability and efficiency of your operation. The choice goes beyond simply moving material from one point to another, especially when considering the demands of incline, decline, and merge conveyors that mills use for seamless continuity.

Factors for choosing the proper belt include the application, operating environment, and the conveyed material's type, temperature, weight, and density. General-purpose belts are ideal for standard conveying applications where products are clean and consistent, and operating conditions are relatively mild. Specialized belts, however, are engineered for the demanding environments typically found in paper mills, where moisture, wood chips, bark, chemicals, high temperatures, and abrasive materials **(Figure 1)** can cause abrasion, chemical degradation, thermal aging, and premature belt failure.

This article examines proper belt selection criteria and how to keep your mill's conveyance system running smoothly, whether it's flat, incline, decline or merge conveyance.

Belt Materials

Belt texture, cover material/compound of the rubber, and cleat design are critical to conveyor performance. Rough-top or textured belts can improve the belt's grip and reduce slippage on inclines and declines, while smooth belts, including those used in merging, are often preferred



Figure 1. Abrasive materials that cut and damage the belt contribute to multiple issues, including costly product degradation. An inspection is warranted to address the problem and return to smooth operation.

for easy cleaning and low-friction conveying, allowing materials to slide into place.

Common cover compounds include:

- Styrene-butadiene rubber (SBR) for general-purpose applications.
- Nitrile rubber (NBR) for oil resistance.
- Ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) for elevated temperatures and ozone resistance.
- Specialty compounds for fire resistance or chemical exposure.

Material selection should account for abrasion resistance, oil and chemical exposure, moisture, and temperature. If any oily substance is being conveyed, a moderate oil-resistant (MOR) or super oil-resistant (SOR) belt should be used. MOR/SOR belts efficiently combat tearing caused by exposure to oily substances. Incorporate cleats whenever product retention is required on inclined conveyors or when preventing rollback of bulk material is critical. For declines, cleats help to hold materials against gravity's pull, keeping them from tumbling down the belt.

Preventive Maintenance

Implementing a solid preventive maintenance program remains one of the most effective ways to maximize belt life and minimize unplanned downtime. Routine inspections should include checking for cover wear, edge fraying **(Figure 2)**, mistracking, damaged splices, improper tension, pulley lagging wear, idler wear, and material buildup.

Proper tracking is influenced by belt condition, pulley alignment, idler alignment, loading practices, and belt tension. In many cases, tracking problems are symptoms of an underlying conveyor issue rather than the belt itself.



Figure 2. Rather than frequently replacing belts, the root cause of issues such as wear and fraying should be evaluated with a system inspection. A common cause of such damage is mistracking of the belt.

Warning signs include:

- Impact damage at loading zones.
- Material trapping between pulley and belt.
- Skirtboard wear.
- Improper transition distances.
- Belt cupping from uneven tension.
- Heat degradation around dryers or boilers.
- Worn or damaged bearings.
- Edge wear at merge points (caused by side-loading).
- Cleat damage or material rollback.

Addressing these warning signs early can prevent costly failures and improve overall system reliability and efficiency. Routines as simple as walking a conveyor and checking for damaged idlers can prevent belt tearing. Comprehensive inspections of the entire conveyor are vital to ensure all components function as they should.

Planning

Planning goes hand-in-hand with preventive maintenance. You can have a great preventive maintenance plan, but it will fail without the resources to carry it out. For instance, keeping critical spares on hand is essential to prevent unnecessary downtime. These crucial belts are often specialized or have long lead times, so keep them stocked and ready to go.

You may often hear "it's what we've always done" at mills and other production sites. While what a site has "always done" may work to an extent, it doesn't rule out a better economical solution that can increase production and reduce downtime. This shows the importance of thoroughly inspecting a conveyor and using the proper belt for that specific application.

Load Capacity Evaluation

Finally, evaluating conveyor load capacity is essential when troubleshooting performance issues or planning process improvements. Variances in production rates, material density, or conveyed product may require more than just a replacement belt — particularly at elevation changes and merge points where load dynamics are more severe. Reviewing belt PIW (pounds per inch width) ratings, working tension, carcass construction, pulley diameters, transition distances, and conveyor horsepower requirements helps determine whether the system is operating optimally.

Troubleshooting

Premature conveyor belt failure remains a highly common maintenance challenge throughout the pulp and paper industry. While many mills today assume that frequent belt replacements are inherent to operating in a harsh environment, recurring failures often indicate an application mismatch rather than an equipment limitation. Selecting the proper belt construction and ensuring correct installation and operation can significantly increase service life while reducing downtime and maintenance costs.

Recycled-paper mills processing OCC (old corrugated containers) and mixed fiber conveyors constantly encounter contaminants such as petroleum-based oils, hydraulic fluids, greases, inks, waxes, and adhesives. Although these contaminants may seem insignificant, prolonged exposure can rapidly degrade a standard SBR cover. Oil absorption causes the rubber to swell, soften, and lose tensile strength, which accelerates cover wear while increasing the likelihood of tracking issues, edge damage, splice failures, and carcass deterioration.

Rather than continually replacing belts every three to four months, the root cause should be evaluated. Often, replacing the existing belt with an oil-resistant compound, such as MOR or even SOR cover grades, can dramatically improve performance. These compounds specifically resist swelling and maintain physical properties when exposed to oils and hydrocarbons common in recycling and paper manufacturing operations.

However, even the highest-performing belt compound cannot compensate for improper installation. Excessive take-up tension, pulley misalignment, worn or improperly crowned pulleys, deteriorated lagging, and poor splice quality all contribute to premature belt failure. Conducting a complete conveyor inspection during installation, including verifying pulley alignment, square frame geometry, proper tracking, transition distances, and correct belt tension, alleviates unnecessary stress on the belt carcass and splice.

One solution to frequent conveyor replacement is upgrading to an oil-resistant belt and installing mechanical belt splicing while simultaneously correcting several installation deficiencies, such as pulley alignment and belt tracking. Following these improvements, belt life will likely extend under the same operating conditions, with a substantial reduction in emergency maintenance, replacement inventory, and production interruptions.

For high-tension or critical conveyors, vulcanized splices generally provide greater strength and longer service life than mechanical fasteners, although mechanical splices allow for faster installation and emergency repairs. A mechanical splice can also extend service life if the belt is aligned and running correctly.

Whether managing standard horizontal runs, complex elevation, or multiple conveyance applications, the most cost-effective conveyor belt is rarely the least expensive option upfront. When belt cover compounds are selected based on the actual conveyed material and operating environment, and installation follows industry best practices, mills can dramatically improve conveyor reliability, maximize belt life, and lower their total cost of ownership. ■

About the Authors

Raymond Borup and Michael Dal Porto are Division Account Specialists at Motion Conveyance Solutions. Borup has 8 years of conveyance experience, and Dal Porto has specialized in heavy/lightweight belting for 16 years. For more information, visit miconveyancesolutions.com.

PCPA Releases U.S. Design Guide for Recyclability of Poly Coated Paper Packaging

New guide brings the operating realities of paper mills directly into the packaging design process.

The Poly Coated Paper Alliance (PCPA) in September announced the completion of its 2026 Design for Mill Recyclability Guidance — the first comprehensive U.S. design guide for poly coated paper packaging, including milk and juice cartons, coffee cups, ice cream containers, and other food and household packaging. The resource provides brands, converters, and manufacturers a common framework for designing poly coated paper packaging in closer alignment with U.S. paper mill end markets.

The release comes as Circular Action Alliance (CAA) finalizes its plan for implementation of extended producer responsibility in California. CAA can draw on the new guide as a mill-informed industry-backed resource to inform fees and recovery strategies in California and in other states in which it is active.

While design guidance exists for other packaging formats and material types, poly coated paper packaging has lacked a comprehensive U.S.- specific resource. The new guide addresses that gap by identifying packaging features and components that can influence how these materials are reprocessed by paper mills.

The design guide is grounded in direct input from U.S. and Canadian mills representing more than 90% of consumption of the relevant recovered fiber grades that contain poly coated paper packaging, including Grade 54 Mixed Paper, Grade 52 Cartons, and other poly coated white fiber grades.



The design guide is grounded in direct input from U.S. and Canadian mills representing more than 90% of consumption of the relevant recovered fiber grades that contain poly coated paper packaging.

"This guide brings the operating realities of paper mills directly into the packaging design process," said Jason Pelz, Vice President of Recycling for the Carton Council. "By grounding this work in direct mill feedback, we're helping the industry better understand where compatibility exists today and where more work is needed."

The guidance uses four compatibility categories: fully compatible, conditionally compatible, not compatible, and unknown. The framework was informed by existing global guidance, including the 4evergreen Alliance, and adapted for U.S. mill conditions based on mill feedback. Additional testing, including RFID tracking, optical sorting, and bale audits conducted by the PCPA, helped inform the guidance.

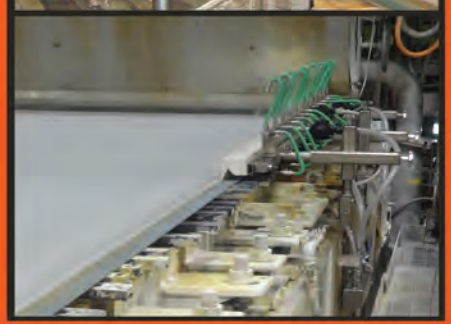
The findings show that seemingly small design choices can influence how poly coated paper packaging performs at end markets. Mill feedback identified differences

(continued on page 30)

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"Brands don't always have visibility into how a design choice plays out once it reaches a mill. This guidance gives them that visibility in a form they can act on."

— Marty Seaman, Executive Vice President of Business Development for Resource Recycling Systems.

in compatibility across coatings, adhesives, and other non-fiber components. This includes the latest guidance for repulpability standards. The guidance evaluates:

- **Mill Compatibility by Non-fiber Element.** Learn how coatings, adhesives, and other design elements may perform across different mill processes.
- **End-Market Insights by Mill Type.** Understand how compatibility can differ across brown and white fiber recycling systems and mill processes.
- **Designed for the U.S. Market.** Use guidance developed around the recovered paper grades, mill systems, and market conditions relevant in the U.S.

"Industry-developed guidance like this fills a real gap," said Scott Byrne, Vice President, Global Sustainability & Industry Affairs for Sonoco. "Having a credible framework already in place gives producers a resource we can consider as EPR implementation moves forward in California and across the country."

Marty Seaman, Executive Vice President of Business Development for Resource Recycling Systems, the consultancy that supports PCPA and the development of the design guide, said the value lies in giving brands a practical reference point. "Brands don't always have visibility into how a design choice plays out once it reaches a mill. This guidance gives them that visibility in a form they can act on."

A summary of the 2026 Design for Mill Recyclability Guidance is available on the Poly Coated Paper Alliance website (www.polycoatedpaperalliance.com). The full design guide is currently only available to PCPA members, advisors, and partners. PCPA plans to make the complete design guide publicly accessible after further industry engagement in the coming year.

The resource is not a mandatory standard or guarantee of regulatory compliance. PCPA will continue to update the resource as new mill input, testing, standards, and regulatory requirements emerge. Brands, converters, mills, and other stakeholders interested in he 2026 design guide, or in helping to shape future versions, are encouraged to get involved with PCPA.

The Poly Coated Paper Alliance (PCPA) was founded in 2023 to provide a collaborative industry platform for achieving widespread collection and recycling of poly coated paper products. PCPA membership represents every step in the supply chain, from collection and sorting to pulping, mills, converters, packaging manufacturers, and brands. PCPA is managed by Ann Arbor, Michigan-based Resource Recycling Systems (RRS). ■

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