

# THE GREEN PAGES

## You won't ever find executives at SWS down in the dumps

By **BRIAN PEDERSEN**  
Business Journal Staff

One man's trash is another man's treasure of renewable energy, as far as Sustainable Waste Solutions is concerned.

The Souderton-based company converts trash from its customers into renewable energy without dumping waste in a landfill. Intended to enable businesses to be more environmentally conscious, the service is designed to fight global warming.

### PROFILE

"It's real, it's making headline news every day," said F. Scott Woodrow, chief operating officer. "I think there's a lot of people that share that view. The younger ones are really pushing it."

The idea of businesses being green and remaining sustainable is a trend that appears to have grown legs over the past several years, according to Woodrow. Business appears to be increasing for the small company, which has been making a profit every year since its inception, according to Woodrow. From 2009 to 2010, the company made a 30 percent profit margin and generated revenues of \$3.5 million, said Woodrow. "We've more than tripled in size in the last three years," said Woodrow.

According to Dieter M. Scheel, business development manager, in the last 16 months SWS has gone from having two trucks to seven, with the possibility of an additional truck waiting in the wings. The trucks are used to haul trash to the plants where the material is processed. By the end of the fourth quarter, Dieter estimated that SWS would have 10 trucks to meet increased customer demand.

Woodrow said SWS has about 80 clients in over 100 locations. Clients include manufacturing facilities, food companies, universities, hi-tech businesses, and virtually any company, large or small, that doesn't want its waste to end up in a landfill, added Scheel.

Some of SWS's major clients include Kraft Foods Inc. in Allentown, Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Johnson & Johnson, and Olympus Corporation of the Americas Inc., Center Valley, according to Woodrow.

One way that Woodrow prefers to do business is by being a contract-free company.

"I won't ask you to sign a contract," said Woodrow. "We do business on a handshake," said Woodrow. "If I'm not doing a good job, fire me."



Photo by Brian Pedersen

**Dieter M. Scheel, business development manager for SWS, drives a waste hauling truck out of the garage.**



Photo by Brian Pedersen

**Sustainable Waste Solutions designs their waste hauling trucks to be energy efficient, with virtually zero emissions.**

SWS's prices for hauling waste vary due to the client's size and nature of their business's trash, with weight of the material and distance of transport factored into the equation.

SWS generates its income through the collection, processing, and recycling of trash, according to Woodrow. The company also sells metal and other recyclable materials to scrap dealers. Consequently, customers often earn money back if their recyclables have a high value, he said. This process takes the form of checks that are sent to clients. It is similar to a rebate that enables them to earn income back from a service they are initially putting out money for.

Since recyclable material such as cardboard has a market value, Woodrow said a percentage system is established where the customer earns money back. As an example, Woodrow said 70 percent of the market value for a recyclable material would go back to the customer, with 30 percent going to SWS as a profit, and the same percentage system would apply for scrap metal, Woodrow said.

Additionally, the company sells and/or buys and rents equipment such as compactors and bailers that contain vegetable-based hydraulic fluid, said Scheel.

When Woodrow evaluates a client, he focuses on what materials can be re-used, recycled, and converted to energy.

SWS's financial partner is Univest National Bank and Trust Co., a Souderton institution that has consistently increased the company's credit line and has enabled SWS to acquire bonds for municipal contracts, according to Woodrow.

SWS started in 2004 as Specialty Waste Solutions LLC and primarily worked with pharmaceutical companies to dispose of their products, according to Woodrow. The company began to realize there was a desire in the marketplace for companies to become landfill-free. In 2010, it changed its name to more accurately reflect what its focus has been for the last year and half, said Scheel.

As Woodrow explained, the energy derived from waste is classified as green renewable energy, which is on par with wind and solar power in the green industry.

The company collects trash from its clients and transports it via truck to one of two generating plants in either Chester or Plymouth Township, both owned by Covanta Energy Corp., according to Woodrow. SWS trans-

ports trash from customers in Eastern Pennsylvania, Southeastern Pennsylvania, and Delaware, Scheel said.

The trucks offer assured destruction, secured processing, and closed-top trailers, with the capacity to move three times the volume of trash that traditional trailers can haul, according to Woodrow.

While Woodrow said the emission controls of the trucks are far superior to traditional trash-hauling trucks, he did say the company is evaluating the possibility of using compressed natural gas to power the trucks.

Cameras installed in the truck cabs can display views from four different directions.

This is helpful for the driver who is backing the truck into the plant, said Woodrow.

Once the waste arrives at the plant, it is deposited into a pit

where it is then picked up by a machine and sent through the processing phases, eliminating all greenhouse gases, according to Woodrow. Then, the waste is sent into combustion chambers where heat is generated.

Next, this produces heat for water contained in steel tubes along the perimeter of the seven-story boiler. Furthermore, a fireball within the plant burns at such a high temperature that the plant becomes self-sustaining and any water used during the process is recycled. Finally, the hot water becomes steam, which is then transmitted through a turbine that continuously produces electricity.

A continuous emission monitoring system in the control room of the plant is coordinated with a live monitor at the state Depart-



Photo by Brian Pedersen

**Matthew Hendricks, operations supervisor and lead driver at SWS, uses an electric grease gun to grease the spindles on the truck so they don't seize up.**

### Business basics

SUSTAINABLE WASTE SOLUTIONS LLC.

- **Executives:** Randy Hendricks, president, and F. Scott Woodrow, chief operating officer
- **Address:** 684 Forman Road, Souderton, PA 18964
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- **Fax:** (215) 723-7753
- **Website:** [www.landfillfree.com](http://www.landfillfree.com)
- **Email:** [info@landfillfree.com](mailto:info@landfillfree.com)
- **Number of employees:** 13
- **Number of locations:** 1
- **Operating since:** 2004

ment of Environmental Protection, Scheel added.

The Chester facility in Delaware County processes 3,600 tons of waste each day, generating 90 megawatts of energy, which produces enough electricity to light 90,000 homes per day, according to Woodrow.

The Plymouth Township site in Montgomery County processes about 1,250 tons of waste per day and generates 34 megawatts of energy. Four megawatts of power are drawn from the facility itself, which allows the site to be self-sustaining, with the generated power used to operate cranes, boilers, and other machinery, according to Woodrow.

Though the company receives a lot of business through referrals and word of mouth, a lot of time is devoted to prospecting, according to Scheel.

"We also spend a lot of money on marketing for a small company," said Woodrow. "We try to get the word out."

Since 2004, none of their employees have quit, been downsized, or fired, according to Woodrow. He said that with 13 employees, SWS spends more on their employee benefit packages than many industry competitors.

"You are only as good as the people you have," said Woodrow. "You have to treat them well or they will go someplace else."

The trucks that SWS uses to transport waste are manufactured by Mack Trucks Inc., Macungie, at a cost of \$160,000 to \$250,000 each, depending on the type of truck, according to Scheel.

"Not only are we doing business in the Lehigh Valley, we are supporting it," said Scheel.