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2/24/2010

Mack Molding's BigBelly compactor runs on solar energy.

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Mack Molding Co., Arlington, Vt., and its customer BigBelly Solar, based in Needham, Mass., have been named joint winners of one of the Global Plastics Environmental Conference (GPEC) 2010 Environmental Stewardship Awards.

Sponsored by the Plastics Environmental Division of the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE), the awards have been designed to recognize corporations and other institutions that have demonstrated environmental leadership and excellence through significant achievements in a variety of categories.

BigBelly Solar and Mack took the prize for "Enabling Technologies in Processes and Procedures" with the BigBelly Solar Compactor, a patented compacting trash receptacle for what the companies call "large-scale, low-cost municipal waste collection programs" that are now being conducted in 45 states and 20 countries.

Instead of requiring a grid connection, BigBelly gets 100 percent of its energy from the sun. A solar photovoltaic panel turns sunlight into electricity that is stored in a small battery inside the unit, allowing the machine to run at night and during prolonged periods of inclement weather.

Similar in size to other trash receptacles, its capacity is up to five times greater (160 gallons) because of compaction. Increased capacity reduces collection trips and can cut fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent, say the companies. BigBelly can eliminate four out of five trash pick-ups, reducing transportation and labor costs.

Optional recycling units can be attached to the compactors to separate trash from recycling. Both units have the same overall design and appearance, although the recycling units contain 50-gallon inner bins and are non-compacting.

More information on the product line can be found at www.mack.com.