

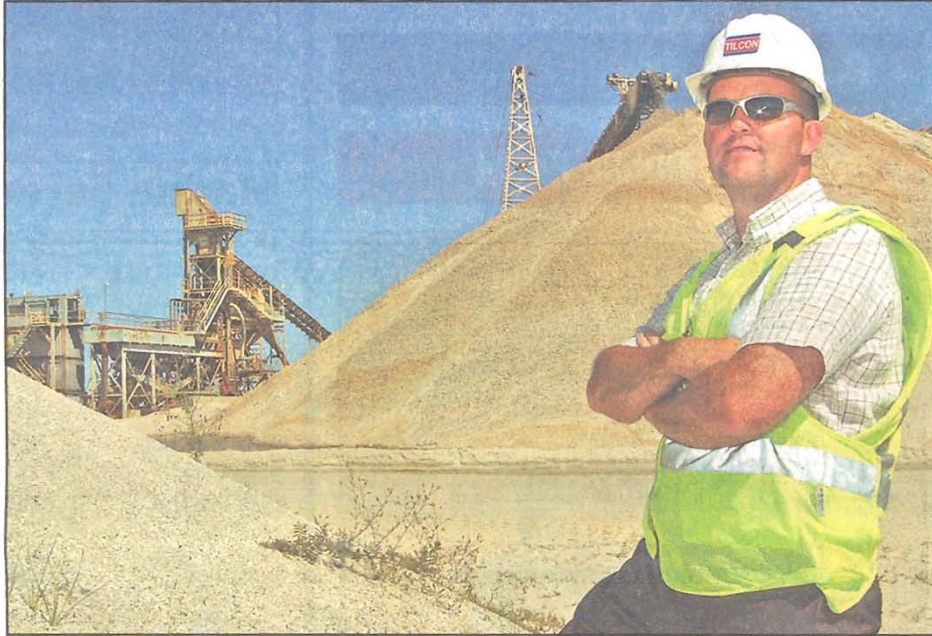
State News SATURDAY

The Downstate Daily

Vol. 107, No. 352

July 21, 2007

Tilcon Delaware: Paving the way to success



Delaware State News/Daniel Korup
Tilcon Delaware vice president and general manager Damien Murphy stands next to the company's sand plant. The U.S. 113 site in Dover is one of 10 Tilcon facilities throughout Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Masonry firm proves rock-solid

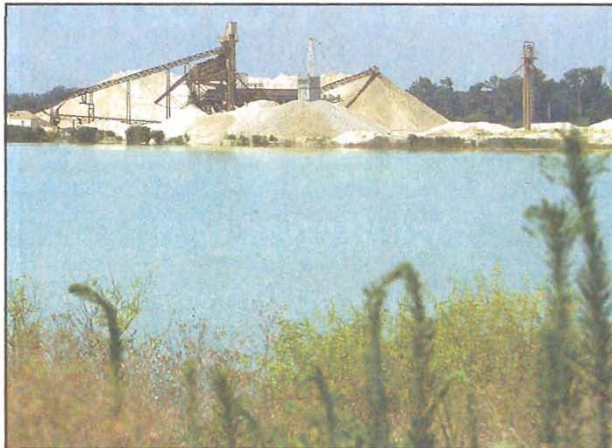
By Kate House-Layton
Delaware State News

DOVER — Drivers along U.S. 113 in Dover are treated daily to a view of a sparkling aquamarine lake and a mountain range of sand and rock.

This sight of Tilcon International that flashes by at 55 mph merely scratches the surface of the vast sand and masonry material operation.

Today, the international company is the largest paving and construction materials supplier on Delmarva. It handles sand, granite, limestone, asphalt materials and recycles overstock roofing shingles and construction concrete.

The U.S. 113 site in Dover is one of 10 Tilcon facilities throughout Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It has five asphalt plants, two sand and gravel production facilities and three rail-and-truck-served aggregate depots. It has



Delaware State News/Daniel Korup
The sparkling aquamarine lake and range of sand and rock beyond it are longtime landmarks of the Tilcon plant along U.S. 113.

had a Dover presence for more than 50 years, said Damien Murphy, vice president and general manager for Tilcon Delaware.

The Bay Road site started

out as a family-owned sand and aggregate business, which George & Lynch bought years later and Tilcon eventually took over. Tilcon has since has

See **Tilcon** — Page 4

Tilcon employs about 220 people in Delaware, with some who have served as long as 42 years, Mr. Murphy said.

"We keep a keen focus on safety," Mr. Murphy said, saying Delaware's sites have gone the last three years without any citations from federal mine safety and health departments.

Because Delaware doesn't have stone quarries, Mr. Murphy said, Tilcon imports crushed stone, mainly limestone and granite, by truck and rail from Anvil, Pa., and other places to Delaware. Conversely, it exports sand from Dover to Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland.

Hard, slick limestone, Mr. Murphy said, often is used in road beds, while harder, rougher granite is often used for road surfaces.

Construction trucks mill around the grounds and the giant mounds of sand, rock, old concrete, asphalt and shingles as Mr. Murphy explains the business.

He pointed to a pile of old concrete tubes and material which are broken and mixed with fresh materials for reuse.

Tilcon processes about 100,000 tons of recycled concrete and 200,000 tons of recycled highway material per year.

About 70 million tons of old highway material is recycled in the United States per year.

The recycling industry for hot mix is larger than glass, plastic, aluminum and paper combined, Mr. Murphy said.

"People talk about recycling paper," he said. "But you put all those together, you don't compare to what you recycle from asphalt."

He also explained how crushed stone, sand and stone dust wend their way through the mazes of pipes and conveyor belts that feed into a large drum with a burner that heats to 300 degrees. The heat removes moisture and



Shingles that didn't make the requirements to be sold on the market are sent to Tilcon to be recycled and melted down and mixed into the asphalt formula for road projects.

Delaware State News/Daniel Korup

prepares it for gooey petroleum hot mix that ends up in one of three on-site storage silos.

Construction clients drive under one of the silos where a trap door drops the black mix into a dump truck.

George & Lynch has been a Tilcon customer for years, said spokesman Chris Baker.

At one time the two companies competed in the hot mix and paving market, until George & Lynch sold that part of the business.

"It's been a pretty good relationship," Mr. Baker said.

Tilcon's signature aquamarine lake in Dover is a byproduct of its sand operation.

Tilcon Delaware ships a little more than a million tons of sand a year for various uses, including at golf courses.

About half the material comes from Tilcon's Bay Road site.

Tilcon has a second dredge operation on Long Point Road in

Dover and buys sand from a Sussex County supplier.

Dover's dredge areas are former farm fields, Mr. Murphy said.

"This whole area here is basically a sandbar," he said. "Over the years, we've basically sucked the sand out of the pond."

The fresh — as opposed to brackish or salt — water that created the lake was not added, but is a result of the dredging process, he said.

As workers pump out the sand, natural groundwater seeps to the surface. The more the company digs, the larger the lake becomes.

The clean lake water also washes the sand before it's separated into fine and rough granules, which machines re-mix in specific proportions for concrete.

"The good Lord just puts sand out there of all different kinds and varieties," Mr. Murphy said. "Some days he'll send us all the course sand and some days he'll

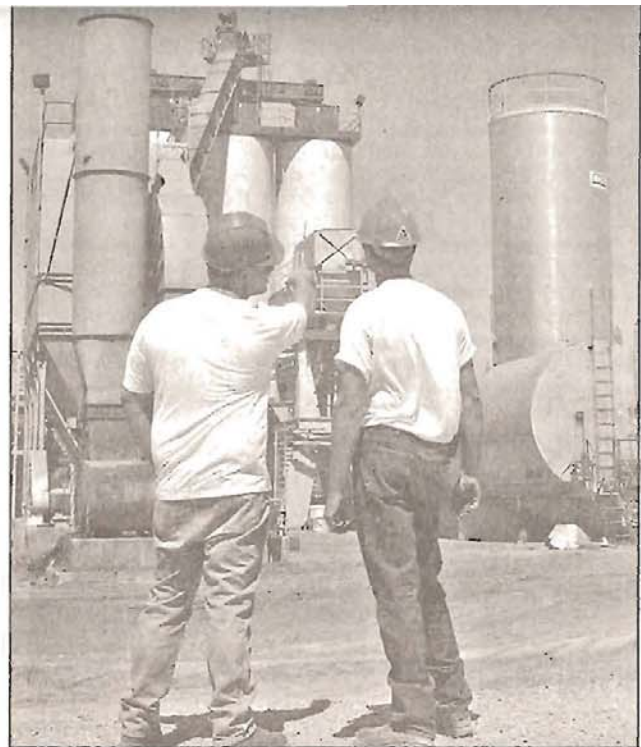
send us really fine sand. Even though we're taking a whole bunch of anything, through this process we're able to combine it back to make sure every day we were making just about the same product."

The lake's greenish cast is a common color for groundwater, said Jarod Adkins, stormwater project manager for the Kent Conservation District.

Iron oxide and other minerals in the soil and sand, he and Mr. Murphy said, are responsible for water's color.

"It's not that we're adding anything to it, it's just the minerals," said Mr. Murphy.

Since Tilcon is a private, self-contained operation, the state Department of Natural Resources and the Conservation District does not inspect the water, Mr. Adkins said. On the other hand, it hasn't had any reason to inspect the pond or had a problem with runoff or water quality.



Tilcon quality control technician Don Messick, left, and platform operator Duke Alexander inspect the air to see how fine the dust emissions are being released into the air to stay in line with state regulations.

A wide variety of fish call the lake home, Mr. Murphy said. Fishing is prohibited there because the lake is part of a federally regulated mining site.

Tilcon does, however, hold an occasional employee fishing tournament at the lake, which is catch and release only.

Mr. Adkins also said fish eggs often stick to birds' feet at other lakes and rivers, where they can end up at the Tilcon lake. He's often amazed during stormwater pond inspections with how quickly minnows and other fish can appear in the man-made water bodies that have no direct contact with natural water systems.

It's because of the birds that

Tilcon has an agreement with Dover Air Force Base to keep the birds away and out of the base's flight line.

Geese are the biggest problem, he said. They'll also get the occasional heron, which does not pose a problem because it is a low-flying bird.

Mr. Murphy said the already large company continues to set its sights on growth.

Tilcon's 250 acres on Bay Road is confined by the St. Jones River and the military base, but the company has earmarked new, unnamed, sites in Delaware where it can expand.

Staff writer Kate House-Layton can be reached at 741-8242 or khouse@newszap.com.