



Let's talk about the power of mechanical insulation

It's time for another trip down music memory lane. This 1970s classic was written by Michael McDonald, keyboard player and lead singer of The Doobie Brothers. (McDonald joined the group in 1975 when guitarist Tom Johnson fell ill.) While "Takin' It to the Streets" takes me back to high school, it also feels in tune with the current moment, as our mechanical insulation sustainability messaging is now "hitting the streets." We are taking our message directly to the people: *Take this message to my brother. You will find him everywhere.*

Let me elaborate on why this moment is so exciting. The insulation industry's message that mechanical insulation plays a big role in helping countries, states, cities and companies achieve their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions goals is resonating. Our industry does help the world be a better place. We are not just insulation, and we are no longer that quiet and unassuming product that gets covered up. Insulation is not a side act, but the star of the show.

In the November/December issue of BIC Magazine, I shared how mechanical insulation favorably compares to alternative CO₂-

reducing strategies like trees and lightbulbs. It drastically outshines these more commonly known methods. Insulating 8 feet of 4-inch pipe running at 350 F with just 2 inches of pipe insulation can offset 20,000 miles of CO₂ emissions from a 2021 2.7-liter truck. Insulating 8 feet of pipe compares to planting 360 trees or changing out 310 43-watt incandescent light bulbs with LED bulbs. This shows the power of mechanical insulation!

We are taking this message to the streets so more companies can realize mechanical insulation is an efficient and cost-effective way to help them hit their GHG reduction goals, while also saving greenbacks, achieving better process control, providing burn protection, and helping prevent system failures in cold weather events like what happened in Texas and Louisiana.

With this issue, we have another real-life example. Events like the World Climate Summit and COP26 in Scotland are spotlighting climate and emissions. So, what do responsible energy and GHG reductions look like in the real world? Well, on this side of the pond, the National Insulation Association (NIA) and our member companies are trying

to make a real-world difference one project or company at a time. One NIA member recently documented how an energy appraisal helped its client greatly reduce CO₂ emissions as part of their 2025 carbon reduction goals. After upgrading their mechanical insulation, analysis showed that one plant alone can save approximately 4.5 million pounds of CO₂ per year, while at the same time reducing annual operational energy costs from \$102,000 to \$8,000. The CO₂ savings at this one plant equates to the carbon sequestered by 4,244 acres of U.S. forests in one year. Mechanical insulation is saving energy and the planet. Who says you can't have it all?

In a future article, I will explore life cycle analysis (LCA). An LCA measures environmental impacts, including embodied carbon of a product or service over the stated lifetime of the product; some call it "cradle-to-grave." Understanding lifetime impacts via LCA is critical to helping building owners and constructors achieve carbon neutral or net-zero carbon construction targets. LCA takes into consideration all the steps that lead from raw material through manufacturing, distribution



and usage to final disposal. To be net positive in emissions, whether it be a company, country or product, one's handprint (the positive impacts) must be larger than the footprint (the negative impacts).

Mechanical insulation, some made with recycled products, is readily available and can make a huge impact on helping companies or countries work toward net-zero targets.

David J. Cox is president of NIA. He has 40 years of experience in industrial and commercial insulation marketing. NIA is a not-for-profit trade association representing both the merit (open shop) and union contractors, distributors, laminators, fabricators and manufacturers that provide thermal insulation, insulation accessories and components to the commercial, mechanical and industrial markets throughout the nation.

For more information, visit www.insulation.org or email president@insulation.org.

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