

Stresau Laboratory given Green Tier recognition

SPOONER – Stresau Laboratory, Inc., Spooner, has been recognized as a Tier 1 participant in Wisconsin's Green Tier program, and was given an award Thursday, April 30.

Stresau has been around since the early 1960s, started by Richard Stresau. The laboratory develops, tests and manufactures energetic devices for commercial and military-related items. It also has a side business in product testing for shipping classification. The site has multiple buildings, with separate storage units to safely house different devices; testing areas; a 40-foot drop tower simulating items being dropped down levels of a ship; and a thermal treatment unit, one of only 14 licensed for treatment, storage and disposal in Wisconsin. The reactive hazardous waste from materials created at Stresau is treated on-site, and the lab does not accept any off-site materials.

The buildings are all spaced far apart, at a required distance, for safety reasons.

Stresau joined the Department of Natural Resources' Green Tier program because it is committed to environmentally safe practices as part of its business plan. Green Tier acknowledges businesses and associations that make binding commitments to exceptional environmental performance. In turn, the organizations are given incentives in relation to their commitments. These businesses are also appointed a contact to work with them and the government.

Stresau qualified for the program for numerous reasons, including insulating its older buildings, installation of high-efficiency fluorescent lightbulbs, conducting an energy audit, creating a recycling program for metals and plastics, and changing their workweek to four 10-hour days, eliminating not only extra energy used at the lab, but also less gas expenses for employees during their commutes.

The Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association is a stakeholder in this program.

Owner Wayne Hanson said at the reception that Stresau is internationally known. They have created lots of materials for the U.S. Armed Forces, and are developing a special fuse "that will revolutionize the system, we believe," he said.

Stresau has always been concerned with the environmental impact, Hanson said, and there are numerous factors guiding them – "corporate as well as personal," he said.

Chief operating officer Mike Pesko said, "We have been very proactive in this area for years. We were thinking green before the word was commonly used."

Pesko talked about some of the things Stresau does to promote environmentally sound living. He said that the lab's TTU eliminates around 100 pounds of its reactive waste annually – far less than the maximum allowed amount, 700 pounds. The lab is currently investigating software to promote more digital use, less paper consumption. They also donate to organizations in need, and collaborate with the Lions Club on collecting reusable eye glasses.

The lab is also working on making "green explosives," Pesko said, so they do not hurt the environment before or after detonation.

Nick Milroy, representative for the 73rd Assembly District, told the audience that as a former Navy man, he was thankful for Stresau's work on making their military items safe.

"Thank you for the work you do," he said.

Sen. Bob Jauch said that the day was a celebration of Stresau's leadership, and a sign of

collaboration between business and government, as often there is conflict between the two. He joked about the Kermit the Frog song, "It's Not Easy Being Green," saying it is very easy to be environmentally safe now.

"Of course it is, Kermit!" he joked.

Jauch said that everyone should realize they all play a role, in a collective effort.

Bryce Luchterhand, of the governor's northern office, said, "You are truly here at a grassroots organization."

Luchterhand said it was impressive seeing how Stresau operates, and getting the Green Tier rating was a badge honoring the significant things the lab has done, and shows they are on a track the government likes to see.

"You set an example, I think, for the rest of us to live by," Luchterhand said.

Not many businesses in Wisconsin have qualified for Green Tier yet, he said, so this is unique to northwestern Wisconsin.

"The governor is very pleased," he said.

Marjorie Bunce, representative for Sen. Herb Kohl, read a note from the senator congratulating Stresau.

DNR Secretary Matt Frank was the last to speak, presenting Stresau with the award. He thanked Hanson for his leadership, and the employees for all their work.

"I can sense the pride in this company," Frank said.

Frank said that the Green Tier program began about five years ago, with bipartisan support, and will be coming up for renewal this year, which will most likely go through.

As a Green Tier participant, Stresau will get the use of the program's logo on marketing materials, deferred enforcement of civil violations and annual public recognition.

The audience was given trees to plant and tours of the laboratory.