

# IP mill commended for environmental care

By Chuck Stinnett

Traditionally, industries and state environmental regulators have a relationship akin to drivers and highway patrolmen: The cops are out pulling over and writing tickets to speeders and dangerous drivers. But some companies, such as International Paper's Henderson Containerboard Mill, want to go the extra mile.

On Tuesday, state officials visited the IP plant to commend them for joining Kentucky Excel, a voluntary environmental leadership program sponsored by the state Department for Environmental Protection. Traditionally, the department conducts inspections, issues notices of violation and takes enforcement actions, Aaron Keatley, director of the department's Division of Compliance Assistance, noted.

"As Kentucky and a nation, we've made a ton of progress" through such enforcement, Keatley said. But, he said, "Something we've learned as an agency, you start realizing there's more to the process than forcing someone to do what's right.

"I keep reinforcing to my staff that there is a time when discipline is necessary and there is a time when you want to mentor and encourage and recognize," Keatley said.

The purpose of Kentucky Excel is to recognize those companies that "make the right decision because they want to, not because they have to," he said.

"We wanted to recognize people who go above and beyond the laws," said Keatley, who toured the mill with Excel coordinator John Eisiminger and state air quality inspector Steve Sanders.

International Paper's mill here didn't simply join the Kentucky Excel program; it enrolled as a Master member, the most challenging level. The mill will be required to pursue multiple environmental projects each year as well as submit to an assessment by a third party and undergo a review by the state. Mill Manager David Haynes credited Larry Griffin, the plant's environmental manager, and his team for their "leadership and engagement at this mill."

"It makes my life easier," Haynes said. "I don't have to worry about it."

The 75-employee Henderson Mill recycles old corrugated boxes to make the heavy brown paper used to make new boxes.

International Paper's four environmental goals as part of the Kentucky Excel program are to:

- Seek viable uses of rejected wood fiber and plastics to avoid landfill disposal.
- Recycle discarded aluminum cans for Habitat for Humanity.
- Donate discarded electronic equipment, such as computers, to local school systems.
- Reuse wooden plugs that secure the paper core during shipment of the paper.

"You guys are stepping forward," Keatley said. "Hopefully you're saving money as a result."