



S U C C E S S I S I N T H E P I P E L I N E



“Essential” Skilled Trades Workers Build Green Bay Packaging’s New Paper Mill



Green Bay Packaging New Mill Dedication Video

Green Bay Packaging opened its new recycled paper mill on March 11, 2021. The \$500+ million investment has had a profound, positive impact on Northeast Wisconsin’s economy and the environment.

This project was the first paper mill built in Wisconsin in more than 35 years. The new mill features a recycled fiber plant, a bio-digester and an automated dense roll storage distribution facility. It produces environment-friendly and high-quality containerboard. It features an effluent treatment plant, BlueLine stock preparation system, and a VariFlex Performance winder. The facility is also equipped with a high-performance 300in (7.62m)-wide XcellLine paper machine, which is designed to operate at a speed of 3,770 feet per minute (1,150m per minute).

The project was a team effort that included Green Bay Packaging, the general contractor, equipment suppliers, union contractors and governmental agencies collaborating to complete construction of the mill on schedule.

“A top priority for Green Bay Packaging and the general contractor was managing logistics to make sure that everyone was communicating as well as keeping the old mill in operation since we basically had two paper mills running at one time,” said Bob Mihalski, Director of Continuous Improvement-Mill Operations Group at Green Bay Packaging.

“Governor Scott Walker along with local, county and state governments also worked well with us and that political engagement was very good from my perspective.”

When the construction journey began, no one knew a global pandemic would impact the health and well-being of the American people and the health of the construction industry. First and foremost, the goal of the leadership team at Green Bay Packaging was to make sure everyone stayed safe, healthy, and employed—because the negative impact of losing a job is as real to the skilled trades workers and their families as the virus itself. It would prove to be one of the most challenging times for everyone involved in the project.

Green Bay Packaging furthered its long-term commitment to Northeast Wisconsin and Green Bay by partnering with local companies to design and construct the facility, driving a significant regional economic impact. Neenah-based Miron Construction served as the design builder of the new mill. At the height of the project, there were over 1,150 workers on-site daily. Through the end of March 2021, nearly 3 million labor hours had been worked to complete the project.

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“Northeast Wisconsin is spoiled to possess some of the finest craftspeople in the country with several high-quality UA Local 400 contractors located in the immediate surrounding area,” said Jason Rieth, Vice President of Energy and Environmental at Miron Construction. “Valued relationships with these subcontractor partners contributed significantly to the project’s success.”

The Benefits of Using Union Contractors

According to Green Bay Packaging’s Mihalski, there was a definite advantage to having UA 400 signatory contractors and skilled tradespeople based in Northeast Wisconsin.

“I believe at one point, Wisconsin was the most concentrated state in the entire country in terms of the amount of paper mills so having the skilled trades workforce with paper mill experience was a huge benefit,” said Mihalski.

UA Local 400 members are the best-trained and most-highly skilled craftspeople in the industry. The organization’s pipefitters, plumbers, fabricators, and HVAC service technicians worked over 500,000 hours installing an array of piping and system components from instrumentation tubing a quarter inch in diameter to the large diameter piping that fed the pulp to the headbox of the paper machine. The group also installed the steam and condensate systems that are critical to the drying process of the paper on the machine and worked in the fabrication shops to keep the project safe and cost effective by pre-fabricating a vast majority of the piping installed on the project. Installing these systems required a vast set of knowledge and skills.

“The largest challenge going into the construction was to deliver on the manpower needed to complete the project within the schedule put forth by the customer and general contractor,” said Trevor Martin, UA Local 400 Business Manager. “Local 400 had up to eight different signatory employers working on the project at its peak. This equated to over 400 pipe trades workers brought to the project by Local 400. Being able to successfully supply manpower to the project when requested was a key part in keeping the project on time.”



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UA Local 400 was able to meet scheduling demands by utilizing its network of other local unions throughout the Midwest and the United Association. By leveraging relationships with locals in Milwaukee, Western Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan and beyond, UA Local 400 was able to pull in more qualified and skilled manpower to supplement the demands of the project.

“By combining the manpower from other UA local unions when needed along with the many UA 400 members who worked on this project, we had a winning combination of highly skilled craftspeople to get this project completed,” said UA Local 400 Business Manager Trevor Martin. “An added challenge, we were managing all of this amid a global pandemic.”

Another one of Green Bay Packaging's core values is environmental sustainability, which matched up well with UA Local 400 since sustainable energy technology, also known as the “green” sector, is currently one of the fastest growing sectors in the pipe trades industry. Green encompasses everything from energy-efficient building practices, water conservation efforts in the plumbing industry and the use of environmentally compatible building practices and materials. The UA has been developing green initiatives for several years, ranging from its mechanical equipment, service and maintenance programs that include refrigerant replacement and handling and HVAC, to the latest in plumbing, solar and geothermal. UA members receive the latest training on “green” technology and that benefits the businesses they serve.

UA Local 400, a member of the United Association Union of Plumbers, Fitters, Welders and Service Techs, has a nationally recognized apprenticeship program that combines classroom instruction and hands-on training for their apprentices at no cost to members.

Using experienced UA Local 400 contractors and tradespeople has a multitude of benefits:

- Expertise and training that provides peace of mind knowing the project is being built safely with the highest quality of work, tools and materials.
- Efficiency on the job and completing the project on schedule due to training, capabilities and experience.
- Unparalleled knowledge and skills to translate your project into a reality.

- Work getting done right the first time.
- Utilization of high-quality tools.
- Use of all the appropriate materials necessary for the project.

Tackling the Impact of Covid-19

The Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic impact was immediate – it was as if the tap was turned off for parts of the business and supplies to site simply stopped but there was a strong sense of synergy between Green Bay Packaging's leadership team, Miron, UA Local 400 and MCA. Everyone understood they had a role to play in order to achieve the common goal of completing the new paper mill and keeping the old mill operating.

As the state and federal governments introduced lockdowns and other restrictions, the pace of change for the contractors was extreme, with everyone involved in the project having to change their ways of working overnight. Due to the pandemic, UA 400 and MCA identified several key strategies to manage the impact of Covid-19 on worker safety, worker shortage, mitigating delays and costs, managing contractual obligations and preventing contractual disputes. Contractors had to complete the project while at the same time protecting the workforce on-site, complying with government regulations and travel restrictions, managing supply chain interruptions and completing the project on time.

“In the midst of a global pandemic, we had a lot of challenges, and it certainly wasn't easy especially since we had decided to keep the new mill on the existing 36-acre site,” said Mihalski. “Our main goal was to keep the old mill running during the construction phase as we could not interrupt our operations because we had to keep supplying our converting plants and customers.”

The construction industry is no stranger to risks, from lack of manpower and escalating tariffs to governmental changes, Covid-19 was an unforeseeable factor with this project. From the start of the pandemic, Miron, UA Local 400 and MCA searched for alternative ways to work and complete the project on time. These mitigation efforts took many forms, as the challenges being posed by COVID-19 required new and creative solutions to mitigate impacts that could ripple throughout the project. Proactive measures included implementing procedures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on their operations and workforce such as health screening

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of workers, providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to workers, disinfecting shared tools and equipment, upgrading site facilities, implementing physical distancing procedures, and implementing remote working. Regular communication and coordination between project teams was the key to the successful completion of the paper mill. However, the full scope of the changes required to address issues arising from the pandemic are still unknown. These new realities touch every aspect of the construction process with issues such as project notices for scheduling and adjustments, termination and reinstatement, OSHA and workplace safety compliance; work force management; material, subcontractor and supply chain delays and impacts; risk management; claims management; and the dispute process.

Safety First and Always

The United Association's Standard for Safety is part of their ongoing commitment to protecting the health and safety of its members and represents a joint labor-management program to promote safe jobsites. The Standard for Safety covers every aspect of safety on the job, from when to use a cell phone to the importance of OSHA 30, a 30-hour training course certified by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. UA 400 members are the best trained, most safety-minded professionals in the industry because they complete regular continuing education and continuously update their skills.

Union labor provides a guaranteed way to get quality work and that is important to Green Bay Packaging. There are real benefits to hiring union contractors; you get the best trained, most safety-minded tradespeople in the industry who complete regular continuing education and continuously update their skills.

“When it comes to safety, Green Bay Packaging takes a strong stand,” said Mihalski. “That’s our most important priority starting with the safety in the design of safety gates, nip guarding, light curtains and identifying any risk so it doesn’t become a safety concern.”

Skilled Trades Are Essential

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has shone a spotlight on the importance of essential workers such as skilled tradespeople. When the pandemic brought the economy to its knees, it's important to note that the majority of skilled trade workers were able to continue to work safely. The completion of the new Green Bay

Packaging recycled paper mill on schedule clearly demonstrates the skill, dedication and professionalism of the plumbers, fitters, welders, fabricators and HVAC technicians who worked on that project. The skilled labor gap widens every year as the older generation of pipe trades workers retire and UA Local 400 is working to recruit a strong number of apprentices to fill those spots. UA Local 400 apprentices must complete a five-year apprenticeship program requiring more than 8,000 hours of on-the-job training along with hundreds of hours of paid and unpaid related training done at the group's 61,000 square foot training center in Kaukauna, Wisconsin.

The UA promotes the highest standards of qualifications and training in the piping industry so that its members have the skills and knowledge to be competitive. UA Local 400 has 2,300 members in Northeast Wisconsin who install piping and plumbing systems in commercial office buildings, manufacturing facilities, hospitals, schools, cheese and other food processing plants, power generation and the paper industry.

America was built by people working the skilled trades and the skilled trades keep America running today. Being considered an essential worker is only one of the many benefits of a career in the pipe trades. Some of the other reasons include paid apprenticeships, on-the-job training, geography resistant, great pay and benefits, job satisfaction, and career growth and options. For more information, visit:

<https://www.ua400.org>

