

# southbendtribune.com

## Company develops niche in brownfield remediation

By GENE STOWE

South Bend Tribune Correspondent

August 12, 2012

SOUTH BEND -- Heartland Environmental Associates Inc., started in 1990 with a focus on removing underground storage tanks, has established a niche as a comprehensive cleanup firm from building demolition to brownfield redevelopment.

advertisement

The company has handled work from coast to coast, with most of its work in Indiana. Some jobs are subcontracted with an international environmental services firm.

"It's evolved into doing brownfield work and all sorts of remediation, cleanups, that kind of thing," says founder John Sill, who had worked for a company that provided tank removals, adding that the start-to-finish service has grown during the economic downturn.

"That would be a niche that we've started doing in probably the last three years," he says. "It's a big change. We do multiple tasks. I've got individuals that work for me that are very qualified in those areas. We spend a lot of time getting that kind of work."

The demolition starts with proper recycling of steel, concrete and brick in the building as well as cleanup of asbestos and disposal of wastes such as fluorescent lights.

"Usually the cities will do those -- normally abandoned buildings, and the cities have taken ownership of them," Sill says, adding that the firm can help cities win grants for the work. "We've done quite a bit of work for the city of Indianapolis. We've done a number of brownfields and that kind of thing down there."

Manufacturing practices decades ago left soil and groundwater too polluted for safe use until the industrial brownfields are remediated.

"Back in the '40s and '50s, people didn't realize they were affecting the environment the way they are with groundwater problems," Sill says. "People would dump in the back field and not think about it."

Technological advances in recent years have helped accelerate solutions, including the use of bacteria for cleanup.

"There's been all sorts of developments for remediating sites," he says. "That's changed things a lot. The way drillers work has changed over the years, how we are able to do the research on properties.

"The technology, like everything else, has changed in the environmental business as well. It's allowed us to become more efficient in things. It's very sophisticated. It's amazing what some of the computer modeling and programs can do."

Among other things, Heartland conducts testing at suspected meth labs in buildings, although it does not clean up such sites.

Workers at the seven-person company include licensed professional geologists, certified hazardous materials managers, certified environmental inspectors, hydrogeologists, environmental scientists, licensed asbestos building inspectors and supervisors, and health and safety managers.

The company's range of skills and the increased public emphasis on environmental cleanup have led to increased opportunities.

"It's grown steadily," Sill says. "Last year, in the midst of the recession, was a very good year for us. We're anticipating to continue on that way."

Copyright © 2012, South Bend Tribune