

# Responsible Tape Manufacturing

By Susan Sutton,  
Editor-in-Chief,  
Integrated Media



The PSTC is pursuing a number of objectives to promote PSA awareness while supporting a more responsible tape manufacturing process.

**M**uch of the world tends to take pressure-sensitive adhesives (PSAs) for granted. Tape, for example, has become ubiquitous in today's society. It's available for myriad applications in literally hundreds of different types, widths and colors. Average consumers (and even some industrial tape users) aren't particularly concerned about where their tapes come from or how they're made—as long as they stick. But that might be about to change. The Pressure Sensitive Tape Council (PSTC) is pursuing a number of objectives to promote PSA awareness while creating a more responsible tape manufacturing process.

## SETTING THE STANDARD

The aim of the PSTC's Responsible Tape Manufacturing Practices program is to validate the industry's environmental, workplace and quality goals. Following a review process, PSTC member companies can include the RTM logo on their product packaging to designate that they are a responsible tape manufacturer (see sidebar for additional program details).

The PSTC's initial goal with the RTMP program is for PSTC members to self-certify that all of their PSA tape products that are sold in the U.S. (or imported) are produced according to U.S. standards and environmental regulations. The deadline for this initial phase is January 1, 2012. The next step will be to expand the program beyond PSTC members. According to Patrick Deconinck, vice president and general manager of 3M's Industrial Adhesives and Tapes Division, and the recently elected president of the PSTC, member companies represent the majority of sales in the U.S.

"The second part of the mission, which will be more challenging, is to try to apply these responsible tape manufacturing principles to all tapes that are sold in the



DECONINCK

U.S.," says Deconinck. "Imports coming from emerging countries are often produced in a regulatory environment that is not as stringent as the manufacturing rules and regulations we have in the U.S. We are trying to influence the industry that whatever is sold in the North American market should be made according to

North American or U.S. environmental, workplace and quality standards. The mission is to create a more responsible tape manufacturing process."

Deconinck hopes that the program will eventually evolve into a standard. "My vision would be that, like the electronics world has the UL certification, we have a similar certification for the tapes industry," he says. "But that is the second part of the mission, which we're starting to work on now."

## INCREASING AWARENESS

Another of the PSTC's main goals is to help grow the PSA tape industry. Toward that end, an important aspect of the RTMP program involves spreading the word about PSTC members' commitment. "We are going to promote to the outside world that the members of PSTC are producing or sourcing tapes according to those RTM principles," says Deconinck.

The PSTC is also reaching out to organizations such as the Association of Mechanical Engineers and the National Tooling and Machining Association. "Our intention here is to really penetrate professional and industry associations to promote the capabilities of tapes in order to convince those people that there are alternatives to mechanical fasteners," he explains. "We want to replace bolts, screws and rivets with tapes."

# RESPONSIBLE TAPE MANUFACTURING

## OTHER INITIATIVES

Raw material availability is a major issue for the industry, especially with the turmoil in the Middle East and its effects on the crude oil market. The PSTC is working to alleviate raw materials challenges by extending membership opportunities to suppliers. "We have been taking on raw materials suppliers as members of the PSTC so there is a more close relationship between the tape manufacturers and the raw material manufacturers in order to help assure more availability of raw materials," says Deconinck.

The association is also working with ASTM and other global associations to help ensure that tape test methods and production guidelines are standardized. "We have been creating a lot of ASTM standards for tape testing," he explains. "We are also setting up—or helping to set up with other global associations—ISO standards to make sure tapes are always made according to global standards."

---

*For additional information regarding the PSTC and its activities, phone (630) 544-5048, fax (630) 544-5055, email [info@pstc.org](mailto:info@pstc.org) or visit [www.pstc.org](http://www.pstc.org).*

## RESPONSIBLE TAPE MANUFACTURING PRACTICES PROGRAM

The PSTC's Responsible Tape Manufacturing Practices program identifies companies that commit to good environmental, sustainability and quality control practices. The comprehensive program brings together all relevant regulations, standards and practices that responsible companies follow. It then reviews company practices to validate compliance.



The program's goal is to acknowledge and raise the visibility of companies that invest in being responsible. It highlights companies that see good manufacturing practices as an integral part of the value they bring to their customers. PSTC members are required to participate in this program. To earn the right to carry the Responsible Tape Manufacturers logo, PSTC member companies must go through a performance validation review.

Companies must initiate the review by completing three checklists in the areas of environmental, workplace and quality policies. The covered standards represent best business practices in the operations of U.S. pressure-sensitive tape manufacturers. Following completion of the checklists, companies complete the one-page declaration of compliance, which must be signed by the appropriate corporate officer.

To validate a company's performance, the confidential checklists are reviewed by a volunteer PSTC task force comprising regulatory and test methods committee members. To maintain confidentiality, each company has an assigned code; only that code is visible to the task force during the review process.

After the program is completed, PSTC tape manufacturers selling tape in the U.S. are eligible to display the Responsible Tape Manufacturers logo to show that their tapes meet these important standards. By January 1, 2012, member company tapes sourced outside the U.S. and sold in the country will also need to meet these standards. Additional details are available at [www.pstc.org](http://www.pstc.org).