



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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Evolution Through Innovation

Heinz E. G. Knopfel, Plant Director
Italcementi, Essroc Cement Corp.

Heinz E. G. Knopfel is the plant director for the Italcementi, Essroc Cement Corporation, in Martinsburg, West Virginia. He earned a degree in mechanical engineering from Ryerson University in Ontario, Canada.

Knopfel joined the Essroc Corporation after a 34-year career with Lafarge North America, working in locations throughout the United States, Germany, France and Canada. His career roles have included director of engineering, plant manager, integration manager and project manager.

In 1989, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Knopfel was integral in the transition of the largest cement production facility in Europe into the free market.

Today, he manages a \$700 million state-of-the-art facility with an operating budget of \$80 million and 150 employees. He is an active participant in many industry conferences.

Building materials have been produced on the site of the current cement plant in Martinsburg, West Virginia, since the 1800s. Lime manufacturing began first, followed by Portland cement production in the 1920s. When lime production ceased in the 1950s, the site became used exclusively for cement. Previous owners included Standard Lime and Cement, which was a division of Standard Oil, as well as Martin Marietta Cement and Capitol Cement. In 2002, Italcementi, through Essroc, purchased Riverton Corporation, which was the previous owner of this plant.

In 2010, the plant underwent a massive overhaul under Essroc, when it was switched from three wet-process kilns to a dry kiln process. The project cost Essroc upward of \$650 million. The upgrades also included an enclosed limestone storage dome, cement/concrete laboratories, a five-stage preheater-preciner, kiln, clinker storage silo, two vertical finish mills, a control room/administration building and a new customer entrance via New York Avenue. It was the most expensive capital improvement project in the history of the State of West Virginia.

With the upgrades, the capacity of clinker production was increased to 5,500 metric tons per day, where previous production was less than 2,500 metric tons per day. This translates to an increased clinker production capacity from around 0.6 million metric tons per year to 1.6 million metric tons per year, or two million metric tons of cement per year.

Over the past three years, Essroc has continued to invest an average of \$10 million per year in the plant. Some of the projects include, but are not limited to, the rail spur expansion in conjunction with Winchester Western; various projects



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focused on reducing emissions; and, plant equipment optimization projects.

The Martinsburg facility is excited about an upcoming project that will include Entsorga West Virginia, a joint venture looking to invest \$19 million to build a state-of-the-art alternative fuel manufacturing facility. This project will produce 45,000 tonnes per annum (TPA) of high-quality alternative fuel to be co-processed in the \$750 million Essroc Italcementi plant in Martinsburg, as a complement and substitute to fossil fuel. It will create 10 to 15 permanent jobs in Berkeley County.

The Martinsburg plant is also First Energy's largest consumer of electricity. Each year, the Environmental Protection Agency honors a select group of organizations that have made



The Esroc cement plant located in Martinsburg, West Virginia

outstanding contributions to protecting the environment through superior energy efficiency. The Martinsburg plant won this prestigious award in 2014 and 2015.

The plant recently celebrated three years, as well as more than one million man hours, without a lost-time accident.

In July 2016, HeidelbergCement acquired a 45 percent shareholding in Italcementi from Italmobiliare. The combination of Italcementi Group and HeidelbergCement creates the No. 1 in aggregates production, the No. 2 in cement and No. 3 in ready-mixed concrete, worldwide. For a multitude of reasons, the Martinsburg plant and its assets will not remain a part of the new company. The site is to be divested.

The future of the Martinsburg plant is an interesting one. As the site waits for a new owner to be named, the employees continue to work safely producing a quality product, all while striving to continually improve the process. ♾