

Sandvik improves sustainability of packaging

As part of its 2030 Sustainability Goals, Sandvik aims to achieve at least 90% material circularity in its operations for products, waste and packaging. Sandvik Mining and Rock Solutions is already taking steps to reduce all unnecessary and single use packaging from the millions of spare parts leaving its main components warehouse each year.

Sending millions of spare parts around the world annually calls for a more sustainable and efficient approach. For each of the approximately 60 000 different Sandvik components in stock at the Eindhoven facility – ranging from tiny screws to giant 10 m long tracks that weigh several tonnes – some form of sustainable packaging remains essential. Currently, Sandvik's packaging costs amount to around €10-million annually, spread across Sandvik Parts and Services' six major parts centres. So, it makes business sense to ensure packaging is minimised to only what is necessary.

"We see driving a shift to more circular business models as a win-win," says Corné Langenhuijsen, Global Packaging Specialist at Sandvik Mining and Rock Solutions' Parts and Services Division. "Our 2030 Sustainability Goals take a holistic approach that includes not only our own operations but also those of our customers and suppliers. We're not only reducing our own unnecessary and single use packaging but also that from the deliveries of our suppliers."

Packaging is a task that requires balancing the differing circumstances of every stakeholder. "We're a premium brand, so we use our quality Sandvik blue and white boxes, when possible. But the crucial thing is that the parts arrive undamaged, otherwise a stylish box is irrelevant," Langenhuijsen explains.

"Data helps us drive improvement. Why buy packaging designed to hold twice the weight it will be used for? We started off using wooden crates, then switched to plywood, but now we favour corrugated cardboard boxes on wooden pallets. They're cheaper, easy to recycle and easily strong enough."

Another vital element in the quest for sustainable packaging is the importance of safety. A perpetual first priority for Sandvik is that packaging should protect its contents, but it must also be as safe as possible in terms of handling to minimise the risk of harm to anyone in the supply chain.

Simply 'doing it smarter' in terms of logistics and planning is another element in reducing the carbon footprint of parts distribution via transport. For example, re-routing Chinese orders that normally come to the Netherlands to Sandvik's Singapore facility for processing. Likewise, the Dutch facility initially sourced finished pallets

from Finland, but importing the wood and making the pallets locally is cheaper and more sustainable.

The use of sustainable materials remains high on Sandvik's agenda. Responsibly sourced timber reduces CO₂ footprints, meaning plywood crates are sometimes the preferred packaging, while even traditional plastics can sometimes be preferable to biodegradable alternatives, where suitable recycling and re-use facilities exist.

Langenhuijsen believes that tougher regulations may be required to encourage faster acceptance and adoption of sustainable packaging across the value chain. The recently introduced UK Plastic Packaging Tax, which penalises production and use of materials with less than 30% recycled content, is an example of how legislation can play a role in supporting supplier sustainability.

"Like our components, we are on a journey," Langenhuijsen concludes. "We can start by buying the most cost-effective packaging, but source it from companies that share our goals – perhaps producing

boxes with green energy – and reusing as much packaging as possible. It's an exciting mission to accelerate the transition to more sustainable packaging solutions."

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