

# A Tale of Two Members

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Since its founding in 1984, NORA has evolved with the times. The organization that began as the National Oil Recyclers Association was first revamped in 2000, becoming NORA, an Association of Responsible Recyclers to reflect the pathways members were taking into collecting wastewater, antifreeze and other materials, as well as oil.

Now, NORA members are diversifying further to meet the demands of a market eager for customized disposal and clean-up solutions. To keep pace, NORA is rebranding to encompass the members who perform the industrial and environmental services that are in high demand among today's industries.

The term is loosely defined, encompassing everything from plant cleaning to emergency response, but the services rendered are a natural extension for companies equipped with vacuum trucks and

processing capabilities. Many traditional NORA members are leveraging their oil-collection and treating assets into new service opportunities, making themselves indispensable to existing and new customers.

Other firms originated to meet the rising demand for help

managing an array of waste that grows more complex every year.

Here, we present a Tale of Two Members. One is the traditional NORA member – an oil recycler that diversified into a one-stop-shop for recycling, disposal, transportation, and industrial services. The other was founded to provide industrial and environmental services and continues to deliver cutting-edge solutions focused on responsible waste management. In a world of commerce steeped in global challenges, both belong to the NORA family for its networking, information sharing, advocacy, and access to solutions.

## Eldredge Inc.: Spotting opportunities for growth

Until the 2000s, Eldredge Inc. was primarily a waste transporter

and a used oil recycling business. Today, oil is a smaller part of the Eldredge portfolio, but the company can thank oil for its rapid growth into waste disposal, industrial services, and transportation.

“We bought and sold a lot of oil at a really good number,” said Oil Plant Manager Drew Fatzinger, who





joined Eldredge in 2010. “When things are good, they’re good. That helped us make the investment into the things we’re doing now, because all of that stuff had cost. The oil paid the bills for a lot of years to help us get to where we are today.”

Eldredge, based in the Philadelphia suburb of West Chester, PA, is “the definition of expansion,” said Fatzinger. Bob Eldredge’s family started the company in 1958 to treat wastewater. By 1996, he was awarded one of Pennsylvania’s first state permits to collect and treat waste oil at his facility.

Then he noticed that local municipalities needed construction waste disposal, so he built and permitted a C&D transfer station. Before long, he started an in-house fleet repair shop that now services major public transportation authorities and even competitors’ equipment.

Today, Eldredge is a multifaceted environmental services provider for a broad range of industries – chemical and specialty chemical, manufacturing, pharmaceutical and health care, refinery and petrochemical, transportation and automotive, and energy, utilities, and communication.

Used oil recycling, while a smaller part of the portfolio, remains an Eldredge pillar, with premier oil reclamation and solidification services, plus antifreeze recycling and waste-derived liquid fuel production.

For clients with hazardous materials, the Eldredge brokerage division offers solutions. Eldredge has cultivated a network of over 100 disposal facilities nationwide, each offering unique capabilities for responsible, sustainable, and cost-effective disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous materials of all sorts.

Brokering gives Eldredge the flexibility to craft customized solutions, said Chief Operating Officer Winston Hibberd.

“We are not burdened by a facility that we have to ship to,” he said. “We are free to go wherever we want to go, as long as it meets our quality standards.”

The Eldredge industrial services and field services division offers a variety of solutions, including tank removal and cleanup for bus depots and chemical plants, lab packs and waste identification, and pipeline remediation.

Trucking and waste disposal first entered the picture as Eldredge personnel noticed that clients in the region’s abundant chemical companies needed more than oil disposal. Today, the transportation logistics division helps customers from Maine to Texas manage and transport their waste.

The scope of Eldredge’s services “all stemmed from our original permit,” said Fatzinger. “We were willing to do what it took. We saw needs over the years, and we fulfilled them. We were willing to invest in trailers and all the equipment we needed to make it happen.”

As company growth accelerated around mid 2010’s, the Eldredge team oversaw modifications to the Eldredge Waste Oil & Antifreeze Reclamation Facility, expanding the sustainable handling of clients’ nonhazardous materials. The facility permit, which is a scarce commodity in Pennsylvania, is “key to getting into customers,” said Hibberd, who rose from intern in 2008 to COO today.

“Without our plant, if we go to a Fortune 500 chemical company as a transporter and a broker, they’ll talk to us but they’re not really into it,” he said. “Once you own a facility, we have an in-house option for their nonhazardous waste, plus hazardous waste solutions, and we can beat out the competition. That’s what gets a lot of the contracts we have.”

In the last 15 years, Eldredge has grown from employing 40 people to over 100, expanding job opportunities in its own community. Fatzinger credits founder Bob Eldredge with creating a caring company culture.

“We’re family first here,” he said. “If you’re not right at home, you’re not right at work.”

Like Eldredge, many oil recyclers have evolved, and the rebranded NORA is evolving along with them in support and breadth of services, said Hibberd.

“Oil alone isn’t as sustainable a business as it used to be,” he said. “You’re going to struggle unless you’re a one-man show with one truck. For medium-sized companies that are growing their capabilities, NORA is a good asset.”

The Eldredge company philosophy, scope, and approach “is not proprietary,” he added. “It’s hard work and information and using standard operating procedures. We’re happy to share best management practices with our competitors. NORA gives us a sharing tool.”

Fatzinger recalls when NORA membership was mostly about networking, as oil recyclers sought contacts with industry peers. Now, as members’ needs evolve with their businesses, NORA events allow connections with top talent that can service every aspect of operations, including IT.

NORA membership also comes with regulatory guidance, policy advocacy, and, if needed, legal representation.

“I’m an ambassador for NORA,” said Fatzinger. “When we go to conferences, I go out of my way to talk to the smaller guys who maybe are nervous and don’t know anyone. I keep them informed on things and introduce them to the right people.”

### **Terra Nova: Going where the need is**

Terra Nova Solutions originated in 2005, in large part, as a provider of in-ground remediation for engineering firms. The work generated wastewater, so instead of sending it out

# TERRA NOVA



for treatment, the company acquired an environmental waste company already performing groundwater remediation.

That 2018 acquisition brought with it the highly specialized service of industrial resin tank cleaning. Then, again through acquisitions, Terra Nova added solidification and hazardous waste labeling, transportation, and brokering.

And yes, today's portfolio of integrated environmental solutions includes oil recycling.

"We all go towards the waste," said Director of Waste Operations John Plowden. "The person that has the resin tank, they're going to have hazardous waste chemicals that need to be brokered offsite. They're going to have industrial tanks that need cleaning. They're going to have nonhazardous waste that

chicken blood still needs a place to go when its intended destination, a dog-food factory, burns down.

"We get stuff like that every day," said Plowden.

While the firm is headquartered in High Point, NC, industrial services "go to where the work is," as far west as Montana. Waste pickup spans from Virginia and West Virginia south to Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee. Over the years, Terra Nova acquired businesses and sited strategically, leapfrogging facilities within four-hour radiuses of each other to keep the daily round trips of 18-wheelers within hourly limitations.

"The footprint's really big in our service," Plowden said. "If you look at where everybody's strategically placed, if you draw a circle around it, it's about a four-hour window from plant to

plant. All of our newer acquisitions are within that four-hour window, where we're trying to connect the dots and keep our service areas overlapping each other."

Terra Nova belongs to NORA for the connections that help Plowden fill gaps in services and provide complete solutions to customers. In the industrial and environmental services sector, competitors become partners when they offer a service that meets a customer's need.

"The best part about coming

to NORA is that you start to strengthen some of those relationships and the bonds, and you figure out the companies that work really well with the culture you have," Plowden said. "I know that they're not going to steal my customer. They can help me build my customer because they have a service that I'm never going to be good at, because I don't want to be good at it, but my customer needs it."

NORA members are open with each other about their challenges, which generates discussions on solving them. Plowden is currently talking in the NORA community about the dilemma caused when compressing wet waste with cement kiln dust amps up the heat rate beyond limits acceptable for landfills.

"That's the stuff you bring to NORA," he said. "Everyone is sharing and figuring out those workarounds."

And when a client of Plowden's needed to offload 600,000 gallons of #6 fuel oil, he resolved the matter by reaching out to a prominent buyer he knew through NORA.

"If I can't manage it for my customer, there's somebody in NORA who specializes in it," he said. ■

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probably has to be sent offsite and solidified. They're probably going to have oil."

Terra Nova found its niche by providing all of those services in total waste management, industrial cleaning and maintenance, remediation, and emergency response.

"We can collect the oil," Plowden said. "We can do the industrial cleaning, and whatever the waste you have on site, hazardous or nonhazardous, we can find a home for it. Everybody takes a different approach, but it all leads to the same management of waste."

Terra Nova also provides composting and waste-to-energy for a broad range of industries in manufacturing, oil and gas, construction, automotive, and rail. When a rail company faced the loss of three tank cars due to a chemical mix-up, Terra Nova cleaned out the hardened resin and saved the client hundreds of thousands of dollars in replacement costs.

On any given day, Terra Nova might be composting tree limbs for a municipality, sending a shipment of miscolored jeans to waste-to-energy, backhauling an electric vehicle maker's waste from California to South Carolina, or solidifying one and a half million gallons of chicken blood – because