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No space junk: Scrap firm helps dismantle Kennedy launch pad

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by Alexis Muellner

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A growing Pasco scrap metal business has a stellar-sized job.

Pasco Iron & Metal and its in-house brokerage company, Green Tree Recycling, agreed to purchase all scrap metal from the extensive dismantling of Kennedy Space Center's launch pad 39B.

The tower helped launch 53 space shuttle missions, and it is no small tangle of steel. There are more than 4,000 gross tons of metal.

The company won the hauling portion of the business in a competitive bid from the Philadelphia-based master contractor LVI Environmental Services Inc.

The material, which has filled more than 400 truckloads, is being shipped directly from the job site in Cape Canaveral to Florida mills for processing.

"The mills like older scrap. It's better quality and made with nice chemistry," said **Matthew Goldman**, CEO at Pasco Iron & Metal.

Goldman can't discuss prices or where the scrap is going, but it all stays in Florida. The mills cut the metal into smaller pieces, put it in an electronic furnace and melt it down, eventually creating new structural steel, he said.

The gigantic project is the biggest for the company and a solid boost to its revenues, but it comes with mixed emotions, Goldman said.

Challenger rocketed off Launch pad 39B, and the site has deep historical value, he said.

With the shuttle program nearing its final launch, he sees impact in the local economy surrounding the center.

"It's kind of a sour story," he said.

The good news is that all of the material is being recycled.

It's not a demolition. **NASA** scientists are on the field dismantling the structure in a way that it doesn't destroy the pad underneath, Goldman said. There is two feet of sand and wood matting so engineers can retrofit that pad to launch rockets there in the future.

Goldman's company handles all the transportation and logistics, including moving some very large and heavy pieces into Tampa this week.

Site 39B held fixed and rotating towers originally built for the Apollo program and was later modified to support space shuttle operations. Its last use was in December 2006 when Discovery delivered parts to the International Space Station. In September 2010, dismantling of the enormous structures began in order for NASA to modify them again to accommodate and support new programs and operations.

Pasco Iron & Metal began in 2008 and said it has tripled its revenue each year since launching. It currently employs 15 on a 6-acre facility in Land O' Lakes.