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Photo by Nikki Anderson

Touchstone Research Laboratory Program Manager Randy Handley and Doug Merriman, composite specialist, work on a product made of carbon foam. The company was recently recognized by R&D Magazine for developing one of the top 100 "technologically significant" new products.

Touchstone Emerges As Innovative Leader

By NIKKI ANDERSON

A Triadelphia company is emerging as a world class producer of some of the most innovative products by making the most of a natural resource found in the Ohio Valley.

By using coal from area mines, Touchstone Research Laboratory Ltd. has been able to develop and produce CFOAM or carbon foam. The lightweight, yet highly durable and fire resistant material, is being used to develop better ships, rockets and airplanes. Recently, employees at Touchstone Research Laboratory were honored for their efforts

with CFOAM by receiving the R&D Magazine award for developing one of the top 100 "technologically significant" new products.

Touchstone Research Laboratory President and Co-Founder Brian E. Joseph said he is especially proud of being selected for the award because of the opportunity to be ranked in the same category of world-class companies.

"It is really amazing," Joseph said, adding that Hitachi, General Motors and IBM also were among the award winners.

CFOAM is manufactured in a pilot plant in Triadelphia. Additionally, a group of professionals comprising the CFOAM team develop new uses for the material including airplane parts, naval ship exteriors and tools and molds.

In addition to commending the "CFOAM Team" members for their talent, skill and dedication, Joseph said U.S. Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., has been a vital outside partner as well.

Touchstone Research Laboratory Co-Founder Elizabeth Kraftician agreed that Byrd has been instrumental in providing support to help produce and market CFOAM.

"Without Senator Byrd's vision in realizing the potential for this technology, it would not be receiving national recognition as a significant new technology," Kraftician said. "He is to be praised for his support of this and other research endeavors that help create jobs here in West Virginia."

Touchstone Research Laboratory was established in 1980 in Wheeling with the mission of providing world-class materials testing and industrial problem-solving services to manufacturers in the United States.