

Progress, Responsibility, and the Byproducts We Leave Behind

Good morning, everyone. I'm glad to be here with you.

I've spent more than thirty years in environmental services, mostly in waste management, emergency response, working alongside the chemical industry, and solving problems that most people never see.

Today, I want to share a few stories about how I ended up in this line of work, and also talk about progress – what it costs, what it creates, and how we manage the byproducts that come with it in a responsible and practical way.

In your industry, every product you manufacture, every chemical or medicine you develop, every bit of technology you create leaves something behind.

That's not a failure – it's simply the reality of progress.

And that's why companies across the country rely on partners like Arcwood Environmental – a company that I've been a part of for more than 30 years and where I now serve as President.

We take responsibility for the waste that remains, so you can keep moving forward safely and confidently, knowing those byproducts are managed with the same care and expertise you put into making your products in the first place.

Granite City

I know a thing or two about the byproducts of progress. I grew up in Granite City, Illinois, right across the river from St. Louis.

A steel mill town. Good people. Hard work. And a whole lot of pollution.

When I was 18, I finally got my own car. A fire engine red Volkswagen Scirocco.

One Friday night I had a hot date –
with the woman who's now my wife,
mother of 3 beautiful girls and
grandmother of two grandsons..

I washed the car, got it looking good, went inside to take a shower, came back out...and the whole thing was covered in soot from a release at the mill.

The Cost of Progress

That was normal. That's just how life was.

All of the sidewalks looked like one of my daughters had just finished an art project and spilled glitter everywhere.

I remember thinking, “Do people really have to live like this?” My dad worked at a different steel mill, and always told me, “Get an education so you don’t have to work in this environment.” That stuck with me.

It was the first time I realized that the cost of progress shows up in people's backyards, on their cars, in their lungs.

I think that moment nudged me toward the work I ended up doing: cleaning up messes, protecting communities, and dealing with the consequences of industry so that people don't have to live the way we did.

Finding My Path

Back when I started, the environmental services industry was young.

My brother-in-law worked at one of the early environmental labs, and I got a job there after school and in the summers washing glassware.

In college I tried architecture. Didn't like it – had to draw way too many trees. Those were the days before AutoCad.

Tried pre-med. Didn't like the idea of being in school forever.

So, I ended up in chemistry.

After school I went back to the lab as a chemist, then moved into consulting because I wanted to be out in the field, and eventually I was recruited to Heritage's environmental services.

I've done pretty much every job along the way—tech services, health and safety, operations leadership, and, very briefly, sales...

...which was the worst two years of my life because operations people are easy to motivate and salespeople are a whole different story.

Protecting Communities

But through all of it, it felt like the right thing to do.

There's a fulfillment in knowing you're helping protect the environment in a very practical way...

...removing asbestos and lead paint from buildings, remediating PCBs, metals and organic solvents to give some examples.

Cleaning up contaminated land so a community can build a park instead of fencing it off.

People want a clean environment, and they also want the benefits of modern life – cars, plastics, medicines, coatings, electronics, packaging, and everything else our industries produce.

Real progress means handling the byproducts of all that responsibly. That's what our industry does.

And over time, the work has changed.

Industry Evolution

When I started, most of our jobs were cleaning up 50 years of waste people had piled in warehouses and dumped in impoundments behind facilities.

The EPA was getting serious about enforcement.

It was a lot of reactive work – spills, emergency cleanups, remediation.

Today it's very different.

Companies are more proactive. Waste handling is seen as part of operating responsibly.

Communities have higher expectations.

Transparency matters.

In my view, the industry has gone through three phases: first cleanup, then compliance, and now responsibility – getting ahead of problems before they start.

Heritage --> Arcwood

Arcwood has been in this work for more than half a century.

Earlier this year we made that commitment even clearer by rebranding from Heritage Environmental Services to Arcwood Environmental.

Same people, same expertise, same legacy.

Now with a name that better reflects our mission: to strengthen industries and protect the communities around them.

And that timing wasn't accidental.

In 2023, EQT Infrastructure – a Nordic private equity company – assumed a majority position in the company.

This investment by EQT gives us the strategic backing and resources to expand our capabilities, modernize our facilities, and accelerate growth.

And because of that evolution – and the investments we've made – today, Arcwood operates across North America with the scale to serve Fortune 500 companies and the flexibility to support local operations.

We manage, transport, treat, recycle, reclaim and dispose of hundreds of thousands of tons of hazardous waste every year.

We run specialized facilities—incineration, wastewater treatment, stabilization, recycling, solvent recovery, emergency response units.

And what that means for all of you is simple: when you innovate, when you manufacture, when you scale, when you develop new chemistries, there's a partner who can handle the consequences safely, consistently, and in a way that keeps your operations running and your communities confident.

The work this industry does is critically important. But when things go wrong, the cost and impact are extreme.

In those moments, I've seen firsthand the importance of having the right partners – partners who show up, stay calm, solve problems, and carry some of the burden.

Partnership in Crisis

I know the value of that kind of partnership because, in some of the toughest moments, I've been that partner.

One of the defining experiences of my career was the BP Horizon oil spill.

I spent about 18 months as our Incident Commander for waste operations in Louisiana.

You couldn't turn on the news without seeing live video of oil spilling into the Gulf.

Pressure like that is something you don't forget.

We handled every bit of waste from offshore and onshore operations, and we had to solve problems no one had ever seen before—logistics problems, human problems, supply chain problems.

For example, they needed thousands of port-a-potties, fast. We sourced them nationwide.

There was a massive ice shortage—needed to keep food and water cool for thousands of responders.

I found an older gentleman that sold ice to fisherman with a tiny machine.

I told him, “Buy a bigger one—I’ll guarantee the cost.” He bought a \$75,000 machine, and I ended up buying about \$4 million worth of ice from him.

The day I met with him to tell him I didn't need ice anymore I asked him - "So, what are you going to do now"? He immediately responded - "retire". "Selling ice to you Mr. Ernie was easy, fishermen are hard". I still get a Christmas card from him and his wife every year.

They didn't have containers for the barges collecting the boom, so we mobilized 2,000 intermodal boxes from across our network –boxes with eye-hooks so they could be craned on and off.

And one of the things I'm most proud of is the boom recycling work we did.

We ran the boom fibers through a centrifuge, pulled out the oil, densified the polystyrene, and GM used that material as heat shields in the first Chevy Volts.

Those early electric vehicles literally used repurposed boom from the spill.

Good partnership can show up in unexpected ways...be it porta potties, ice, or any number of other examples.

Proof, Not Promises

The point isn't to brag. It's that environmental work isn't just about chemistry and regulation. It's problem-solving. It's resourcefulness. It's keeping people safe.

It's stepping up when your partners are overwhelmed.

That mindset – safety first, take care of people, be the problem solver – is how Arcwood operates every day. Safety is our core principle.

It guides our people, protects our customers, and ensures that every project is completed to the highest standards of performance and integrity.

A more recent example is the East Palestine derailment.

As you know that train was carrying various chemicals, so it hit close to home for many of you. We were part of that cleanup as well.

And the big challenge there wasn't just the waste, it was the public perception. Communities didn't want the material coming in. They didn't trust the process.

They didn't want assurances, they wanted proof.

Our approach was the same as always: operate safely, be transparent, communicate clearly, and get the job done the right way.

And that consistency matters, because our work strengthens industries and the communities that depend on them.

It's not glamorous work, but it's essential.

And it's the reason companies across sectors – from local manufacturers to the largest chemical companies in the world – turn to Arcwood for support.

Over the years I've walked through more plants, warehouses, and tank farms than I can count.

And what's always struck me is that no matter how different the process or the product, everyone is trying to do the right thing.

They want to run safe operations. They want to be responsible with their waste.

But they also need partners who can help them do it right – partners who don't just show up with a truck, but who show up with real experience, real technology, and real accountability.

The Reality of Progress

Everyone wants the outcome of progress, but nobody wants the byproducts.

People want new medicines and personal products, but not the incinerator. They want electric vehicles, but not battery plants.

They want cloud computing and AI,
but not the data center or
semiconductor manufacturer next
door.

They want nonstick cookware, but not
PFAS.

The hazardous waste industry makes
all of this possible.

We're the quiet infrastructure behind chemical innovation.

We take responsibility for what remains, so our customers can innovate responsibly without leaving communities behind.

The PFAS Challenge

Let me touch on one issue in particular: PFAS.

These so-called “forever chemicals” have been used in countless coatings, firefighting foams, and industrial processes.

They resist water, oil, heat, and grease, and they don't break down easily.

That's why they're showing up as long-term liabilities for manufacturers and communities alike.

At Arcwood's East Liverpool, Ohio facility, we operate a permitted hazardous-waste incinerator capable of destroying PFAS-containing materials, and we offer a full suite of services – from onsite sampling and system removal to packaging, transport, and disposal.

In other words, when you partner with Arcwood you're not just outsourcing disposal; you're gaining a turnkey strategy to address the waste side of innovation.

What this means for you as a chemical manufacturer is critical: regulatory pressure is mounting, and the cost of doing nothing is rising.

Many alternative technologies still require huge energy inputs and unproven performance.

Incineration works, it's proven, and is one of only a few viable pathways today – and Arcwood is one of just a handful of companies doing it at scale.

So, when you're designing new chemistries, launching new lines, or managing legacy streams from old formulations, you don't just want a vendor – you want a partner whose experience, technology, and network remove risk and allow you to focus on what you do best: manufacture the future.

The Future We Build

I grew up in a place where the costs of progress were visible on the cars, the houses, the side walks, the people.

I've spent more than three decades
trying to make sure families today
don't experience what my family did.

And in St. Louis, where I live, we're
still debating data centers, water use,
electricity, and public trust.

These aren't theoretical issues.

They affect where my grandkids play,
where families fish, and how
communities feel about the industries
around them.

This industry has come a long way.
Chemical manufacturing has come a
long way.

But the next chapter requires experience, consistency, and a willingness to educate and engage, because perception matters just as much as performance.

Arcwood was created for this moment: to help companies stay grounded in what works, to solve real problems –not just the shiny ones.

We are committed to operating safely with advanced technology and skilled people, to supporting innovation while protecting communities, and to taking responsibility for what remains so that progress can continue.

I'll be around afterward and our Arcwood team is here throughout the conference. Please come introduce yourself or stop by our booth.

We'd love to learn about your work and talk about how we can support it.

If we get this right together, we can build a future that is innovative and responsible, safe and sustainable, ambitious and practical. A future our kids and grandkids will be proud to inherit.

Thank you.