

Controlling the Color of Plastics



In the 1967 hit movie “The Graduate”, Benjamin Braddock (played by Dustin Hoffman) is given some advice by a family friend Mr. McGuire (played by Walter Brooke) at his graduation party. Mr. McGuire starts by saying to Ben “I just want to say one word to you – just one word”. After making sure Ben is in fact prepared to listen to the advice he is about to offer, he sums it up by saying “Plastics.” A somewhat unsure Ben replies, “Exactly what do you mean?” To this, Mr. McGuire retorts, “There’s a great future in plastics” suggesting that Ben follow his footsteps into the world of plastics. History has proven just how prophetic those words were forty-two years ago. Plastics have revolutionized the way we live.

Just take a look around you on any given day and you will see just how integral a part of your world they have become. From the dashboard and door panels in the car you drive, the bottle that dispenses your ketchup, the housing of your laptop computer, the shower curtain in your bathroom, to the spring water you pull out of your refrigerator, plastics play a role in our everyday lives. According to chemical giant BASF, global plastics consumption will reach over 500 billion pounds in 2010. Per capita consumption in the U.S. alone will be more than 300 pounds in 2010. That is more than 300 pounds for every man,

woman and child in the United States. Compare that with a consumption rate of 223 pounds in 2001, we have witnessed a whopping increase of 36% per person in just nine years. That is almost one pound per day, per person of consumed plastic material. These numbers are staggering to say the least.

Up to the point of consumption, an entire chain of events occur that most consumers are oblivious to. Pigments are manufactured, resins are produced, additives are purchased, and injection and blow molding equipment is engineered. All of this comes together to produce the bottle you pour detergent from to wash your clothes or the bottle you drink beer from at a professional football game.



