

# PPG's silica plant ready to make tires greener

THE GLOBAL TIRE INDUSTRY IS CATCHING ON TO THE BENEFITS OF AGILON, PPG INDUSTRIES' INNOVATIVE AND 'GREEN' SILICA PRODUCT. WHAT ARE ITS UNIQUE FEATURES, AND HOW IS PPG MEETING THE GROWING DEMAND? WE ASKED PPG'S PLANT MANAGER MR. JOS HUDEPOHL IN DELFZIJL, THE NETHERLANDS.

'Agilon® is a patented modified silica, developed by PPG Industries as a reinforcing filler in rubber tires. Like conventional types of silica, it improves tire performance in terms of traction and rolling resistance. In addition, it reduces tire wear. What makes Agilon® 'green' is that during the rubber production process VOC emissions are reduced. Compared to conventional silica, manufacturers can mix the product with less additives. Agilon® comes with all the qualities that this dry mixing process would bring, and we produce it in a wet process in our specialized plant. Also, the improved performance of the end product helps to make cars more fuel efficient, thereby saving resources and reducing emissions.' explains Mr. Hudepohl.

## Growing demand

'Our Delfzijl plant has been a 'pilot plant for PPG' Silica Products since 1993, and over the past few years Agilon® has been one of the piloted products. Last year we added a second production line that increased our total capacity by 30%. We have applied several innovations in the new line, such as a fully separate wastewater stream and pneumatic transport. A specially developed skid allows for automated routing. The materials and layout of the conduits make them suitable for Agilon® as well as for our other products. The extra capacity is also reflected in a new tank park, loading facilities, silos, reactors, dryers and packaging equipment.'

'We are ready to play our part in accommodating the tire industry as it aims to improve its sustainability performance.'



Mr. Jos Hudepohl

## Challenges to tackle

'There were two key challenges to this whole project: the complexity of fitting a whole new line into an existing plant and time. The time aspect we overcame through excellent collaboration with the four contractors in design and construction. We were able to keep a tight rein on the process and even re-prioritize in a way that allowed us to start production some months ahead of schedule.

3D modelling based on a point cloud scan of the whole plant gave us a solid base for an unusually smooth construction process. The visualization of the process alerted us to possible conflicts.' ■



Tebodin provided engineering services and overall project management in this challenging project, as it was a brownfield project within an operating plant. We managed and engineered several different phases and tight turnarounds to keep the impact on the production limited.