

The Record

Obama praises Carlstadt firm's innovation

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President Obama touted the work of Carlstadt-based Hycrete Inc. Thursday for developing a waterproofing concrete additive that can mean that bridges, roads and buildings can last 20 or 30 years longer.



Hycrete CEO David Rosenberg, right rear, was honored Thursday at the White House for his company's concrete waterproofing additive.

"When you hear about the innovation that's taking place, that gets you excited about the future," Obama said in the White House Rose Garden after meeting with executives of eight large and small companies that are adding jobs this year.

Among them was Hycrete's chief executive, David Rosenberg, who said afterward that Obama seemed intently interested in how to revamp the government to provide incentives for innovation.

"He really seems to get it, and it was a fantastic experience," Rosenberg said in an interview outside the White House.

Adding waterproofing to the concrete as it is laid, instead of adding a sealing layer later, saves builders money and time, Rosenberg said. And preventing water from seeping into roads and bridge decks prevents potholes and corrosion of steel beams.

The company also says Hycrete ultimately reduces landfill waste from demolition because it can be recycled, whereas many traditional sealants make it impossible to recycle stone. That helps buildings receive "green" certification for environmentally friendly construction, and helped win Hycrete an award for pioneering technology at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Obama held the event to show that some innovative companies are adding jobs this year. The event occurred as the Labor Department announced the nation lost 467,000 more jobs in June.

"It took years for us to get into this mess, and it will take us more than a few months to turn it around," Obama said. "That's why the discussion that we had today is so important. It's men and women like these who will help lead us out of this recession and into a better future."

Compared with some of the others, Hycrete's growth is minuscule. Rosenberg said he's gone from 25 employees last year to 40 now and is still looking for more people.

He's also opened five more offices around the country and three overseas. But despite their product being used in projects including new headquarters for Nintendo and Amazon and a building for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, his workforce remains small because his people work with contractors to show them how to use Hycrete.

"We don't do the construction, we just educate the team on hand on how to do it," Rosenberg said.

The company also had help from the government. Hycrete was founded in 2005 with a grant from the state Economic Development Authority and money from the venture fund of the New Jersey Technology Council. Since then, it has attracted venture capitalists.

Sens. Bob Menendez and Frank R. Lautenberg, both D-N.J. also sponsored a \$2 million earmark in the 2009 budget to have the Army Corps of Engineers conduct demonstration projects with Hycrete for possible use in military construction. Rep. Steve Rothman, D-Fair Lawn, and the senators are requesting another \$2.1 million in the 2010 budget.

Rosenberg said most of the earmarked money is going to the corps for work, not to Hycrete. But Rosenberg said federal lawmakers' help was needed to get officials in the executive branch to look at the results of company test data, including work done previously for the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, the state Department of Transportation and private builders.