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International Paper's Franklin Mill Named Shipper of the Year

Norfolk – International Paper, a valued customer that returned to using The Port of Virginia last year, is the 2013 recipient of the Port of Virginia's Shipper of the Year award that was presented May 9 at the Virginia Maritime Symposium.

"This award recognizes a company that has gone above and beyond the course of normal business to help the port grow both commercially and operationally," said Thomas D. Capozzi, vice president of global sales and customer service for Virginia International Terminals Inc. "International Paper has worked well with our operational staff and has been very open to ideas and discussions about how to better process its cargo coming through here."

International Paper reopened its mill in Franklin last June to produce fluff pulp. Several other locations were considered, but the availability of a trained workforce, proximity to raw materials and to the Port of Virginia played a large role in the decision to convert the mill to produce pulp.

"We are delighted to accept this award on behalf of the Franklin Mill and the many efforts each member of our team has played in ramping up our operations." Our goal is to have a safe and reliable mill that delivers a high-quality product to our customers," said Allison Magness, mill manager for the Franklin Fluff Mill. "We've accomplished so much since start-up, and this award is a wonderful reminder of that."

"Container volume since the mill has reopened has grown dramatically and they are exploring opportunities to ship pulp via breakbulk ships as well," Capozzi said. "Breakbulk shipments can be handled by the port's network of on-dock warehousing."

Other factors that were taken into consideration during the selection process of International Paper included:

- The significant impact to the Hampton Roads/Franklin community for job creation. This includes jobs at the plant and for vendors serving the facility and its ancillary needs;
- Overall reinvestment in the community; and
- Multiple spin-off opportunities that include the attraction of new transportation vendors – trucking companies, for example -- to handle export cargo.

The mill is producing about 800 tons of fluff pulp each day, and is pursuing overseas exports where the demand is great. "In more ways than one, we're glad to have IP back as a port customer, employer and contributor to our region's economy," Capozzi said.

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