Roger Filion, president and Susan Filion vice president co-owners of Kasi Infrared, want to make the best infrared equipment on the market and to establish infrared restoration as the industry standard for all permanent asphalt repairs. It is a lofty goal but one that is fast becoming a reality.

Kasi Infrared, a division of R Filion manufacturing, Inc., is a woman-owned business that is headquartered in Claremont New Hampshire. Kasi Infrared was started by Albert V. Knipfing in the late 1990's, making asphalt restoration equipment including hotboxes and oil-fired asphalt reclaimers and propane-fired asphalt reclaimers; equipment that they still manufacture that is used in asphalt restoration and repairs.

"I think the first company was Poweray," says Filion. "The two owners of Poweray split up. One of them turned half of the company into Ray-Tech, and the other half of it Kasi Infrared bought and started the infrared company from that." That was back in 1998 that Kasi Infrared was started.

Filion who had been working with Knipfing for about eight years, decided to buy Kasi. He and his wife purchased Kasi over two years ago. “Al [Knipfing] wanted to stay in the sales part of it, and I wanted to stay in the manufacturing part of it. It was a good fit. He is without a doubt the most knowledgeable infrared person in the country. So having him in our corner as a dealer for Kasi Infrared equipment is a nice asset”

Filion with Knipfing’s continued expert input began to really build the company. “The infrared technology has been around for over thirty years. It had just never been marketed, and no one ever spent any amount of money investing into it to improve the system to make it more user-friendly. When Kasi came along, that was what we swore we were going to do, and we have done it.”

Types of Equipment

Today, they build three types of equipment: infrared pavement heaters, infrared asphalt restoration systems, and asphalt storing, recycling, and hauling equipment. But the cornerstone of their business is asphalt restoration equipment. “This equipment is unique in the sense it saves pavers, seal-coaters, states or townships and consumers a lot of money in asphalt repairs,” Filion says. “If you have a utility cut or a pothole, an infrared machine can make that repair in roughly 20 minutes. It is a seamless, permanent repair. Infrared will outperform any conventional repair.”

Conventional repairs and even newer chemical products such as liquid asphalt promise to be seamless, but really are not. Many fill-tamp-and-go repairs actually do not hold and pop out once moisture seeps in around the seams. “It is just a waste of labor and material. With infrared, you actually are turning the existing asphalt back into a workable condition, 2 inches deep,” Filion explains. “You re-rake it spray on a little cyclogen, continued on 9
which is an oil-based product that puts some of the oils that have been baked out from the sun and ware, with time back into the repair. Then add virgin material to the repair to level it back out. You compact it, and you have a permanent seamless repair.”

More municipalities and highway departments are looking seriously into infrared technology every day. “It has taken time to get this equipment out there and get it recognized,” says Filion. “There are a lot of states now where it is mandatory if you cut asphalt, it has to be finished with infrared.”

Many townships in New Jersey are requiring infrared for all repairs. “Any utility company there has to have an infrared contract before they are allowed to make these cuts. So, it is catching on. It is just taking some states longer than others to see it and believe it.”

Kasi Infrared sales are reflecting this growing interest. They sell machines all over the country, even into areas deeply affected by extreme weather conditions and frost heaving, such as New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Alaska. They also are shipping them around the world. “We just sold one in Israel. We have them on the Island of Palau. We have several in China. We have them in Brazil and Australia,” says Filion.

Kasi Infrared’s pride and joy is a new hydraulic machine they call the Patriot. “It is all hydraulic,” says Filion. “It is one very user-friendly machine. It has kind of revolutionizing the old way of doing infrared.”

Filion and his team also put in a lot of R&D into developing new equipment and new ways of making asphalt repairs. “We are in the process of introducing a new trailer-mounted piece of equipment,” says Filion. “The trailer-mounted ones have always been an issue to change over.

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Cables and winches run all the chamber and compactor area, which in my opinion is risky and not dependable. We have taken on the challenge of converting that to all hydraulics. That will be our new baby that we will have coming out in a couple of months, an all hydraulic trailer-mounted piece of equipment to go along with our truck-mounted system.” The truck-mounted system currently is all hydraulic. We still offer our old system with winches and cables to those who want the old style.

Designing state of the art equipment is one thing. Pricing it is another. “One of the problems that we ran into years ago when we started this project of trying to build the best piece of equipment on the market was trying to sell a Cadillac at Chevrolet prices because you have to compete with what is out there,” says Filion. “A few years ago, we decided we were not going to do that any more. We are going to build a quality machine. We were not going to cheapen them up. We stuck to our guns.”

Manufacturing Plant

Kasi Infrared today employs about fifteen people. Even two of Filion’s sons Jarrod and Chad work for them. “They are going to be running the infrared machine this summer, doing repairs. In the off time, they are in the factory working right along with everyone else. They both have learned a lot, and they have come a long way,” says Filion.

In addition, Filion speaks with great pride about all of his employees. “We are very proud of the people we have here in the factory. They are very dedicated to Kasi, and they take great pride in each machine that goes out the front door. We have the fortune of having a very good workforce that is very dependable and is very dedicated to what we do.” On shipping day, all of the employees take one final look at what they have created, and they launch the machine with as much pride as people christening a ship or seeing the space shuttle take off. “It is a pretty proud day when you ship them out,” Filion adds.

Service and Training

The company also services every machine they make and provides a training program for users. “We do an onsite training that is part of the package,” says Filion. They also provide parts and services for other manufactures equipment such as Power Ray and Ray-Tech. They also participate in special workshops. “We usually have infrared seminars at trade shows that people who are just getting into the infrared business can go to and learn how the infrared process works. It is like a school. Al Knipling does a lot of these seminars. He is very highly thought of throughout the industry for his knowledge of infrared.”

Shows
Like many manufacturers, trade shows are ways to introduce a new line of equipment or a new technique. They also are places to show off infrared technology. “We try to do demonstrations for people who would like to see it in operation,” says Fillion. They also run a how-to video on a big screen television. “We will end up with 15 to 20 people watching this video. Out of those people, there are probably only three or four people interested in infrared, but they are just mesmerized by this process.”

But something else happens that is very unique to Kasi. “It is very rewarding when you go to shows like in Vegas and Nashville, and several of your existing customers come to the show to spend some time at your booth. They get people over to look at the machine, and they end up helping us sell. It is definitely something you do not see every day,” Fillion says.

Kasi Infrared, however, keeps on innovating. “We try to improve every day on things that we do and give the customer the best product that we can and the best service that we can,” says Fillion. “There are several infrared manufacturers out there, but there are really only a few of us that make heavy, industrial type machines. A lot of them make smaller walk-behind kind of machines. We also do, too, but our biggest market is the truck-mounted and the trailer-mounted machines. There are really only two or three that do that. Of our closest competitor’s machines in the last three years or so, we have converted over 40 of their machines over to our system. So that tells you something about the quality of our machines and services.”

Fillion’s goal was to build the finest piece of infrared equipment on the market. “We have achieved that goal with our new Patriot,” he says. “A lot of R&D went into making our machines much more user-friendly and dependable for customers.” Contractors and municipalities are beginning to appreciate that.