REDUCING DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING MORE

Thoughts from the other side of the roll-off can

by Thomas Ramsey, P.E.

January 2014
Outline for this discussion

• A few facts as background
• A brief look at what happens to waste once it leaves the construction site
• Discuss an alternative to the status quo
• Parting thoughts
Background

• In Maryland alone, nearly 1.6 million tons of construction and demolition (C&D) waste was disposed in 2011.

• While C&D disposal rates vary widely, in the Northeast they are commonly $60 or more per ton.

• The drive to recycle C&D waste is coming from many fronts.
The current system of collection
The current system of processing
Another method of processing
The result

- Processing is labor intensive and expensive
  - Little/no discount given to the customer
- Potential contamination of recyclables
  - Mixed wastes can contaminate a whole load
- Most goes to the landfill anyway

You end up paying for convenience
An Alternative: Source Separation

• Keep recyclable materials separated
• Is simple, robust, and flexible
• Common C&D materials that are easily recycled
  • Metals
  • Cardboard
  • Brick/asphalt/unreinforced concrete/other inert materials
  • Untreated wood
The Problems

- If it’s not in the contract requirements it generally won’t happen
- Lack of space for additional storage at construction sites
- Training tradesmen and laborers
- Cost savings are not guaranteed and require effort
- It’s a hassle and your time is valuable

Problems are not insurmountable and can be addressed through planning
The Advantages

- Can document recycling volumes
- Will improve recycling percentages
- Can lower disposal costs if you are smart
  - Confirm that haulers will provide discounts
  - Identify materials that are good targets for recycling
  - Make sure you will have nearly-full loads

It is an opportunity to be ahead of the curve
Parting Thoughts

• Need to be smart – target recyclable materials based on the project
• Changes are coming whether we like it or not
  • Regulatory mandates
  • Disposal bans
  • Overall desire to be green
• The cost for convenience is going to continue to grow
Thank you

Thomas Ramsey, P.E.
Geosyntec Consultants
10220 Old Columbia Road, Suite A
Columbia, Maryland 21046
tramsey@geosyntec.com
410.381.4333