

Solid Waste Management on Construction Sites

"Where there is man, there is trash."

The source of this quote is unknown, but statistics provide the proof. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. produces an average of 209 million tons of municipal solid waste per year, which works out to about 4.3 pounds of waste per person per day. Contributors include residents, institutions, and businesses, including construction sites. Therefore, solid waste management is an essential component of each construction project.

Proper solid waste management addresses the collection, handling, and disposal of trash at the construction site.

Calling A Solid Waste, A Solid Waste

Solid waste is as varied as its many names, and before one can properly manage solid waste one must be able to identify trash and its sources.

The following is a list of construction activities and the associated solid waste that may be generated:

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| ■ Wood Framing | ■ Scrap Wood/Sawdust |
| ■ Wall Construction | ■ Masonry Block & Mortar |
| ■ Clearing & Grubbing | ■ Organic Waste |
| ■ Pavement Repair | ■ Concrete & Asphalt |
| ■ Concrete Washout | ■ Cement Residue |
| ■ Sandblasting | ■ Sand & Other Rebound |
| ■ Material Use | ■ Packaging Waste |
| ■ On-Site Personnel | ■ Domestic Wastes (Lunch) |
| ■ Maintaining Equipment | ■ Grease Tubes & Oil Cans |
| ■ Public | ■ Domestic Wastes (Litter) |

Now that you know some of the activities and types of solid wastes produced, let's explore some basic methods of managing these wastes.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – 3Rs

Most everybody is familiar with the 3Rs. The 3Rs are practiced and preached by many California cities. These same three prescriptions should be practiced on the construction site.

Reduce: Wherever possible, minimize the production of solid waste. Reduce packaging wastes by purchasing materials in greater quantities or purchase materials packaged in reusable or recyclable containers. Prohibit littering by construction personnel.

Reuse: Wherever possible reuse waste generated during the construction of the project. For instance, green waste can be chipped to produce mulch for use as temporary stabilization or as duff.

Recycle: Recycle material as appropriate. Scrap metal and wood pallets are readily recyclable.

For the waste materials that have no reusable value, properly dispose of the waste in accordance with the contract plans and specifications.

What It Takes For A Successful Program



Illegally dumped trash and public litter must be collected, stored and disposed of with other construction site trash.



Material and waste storage area that is not well managed. Materials will collect in the V-ditch and may be transported to a neighboring property during a rain event or strong wind.

Education, collection, proper storage, and proper disposal are the keys to a successful solid waste management program.

- Educate construction personnel about the types of solid waste and proper collection and handling procedures.
- Collect site trash, including trash deposited by others, regularly (daily during rainy or windy conditions).
- Designate on-site waste storage areas, provide adequate amount of waste storage facilities, and protect stored wastes from potential runoff by rain or wind.
- Finally, plan for regular disposal times to prevent trash from overtopping waste containers.

