

Architectural Waste Recycling in Vermont –A Primer

On the heels of Vermont’s Universal Recycling law, the Legislature passed Act 175 in summer 2014 with the goal of increasing reuse and recycling of wastes generated from building construction and demolition projects. This overview sheet is intended to help developers, contractors, property owners, waste haulers, and the general public to understand the law’s requirements and construction and demolition (C&D) waste reduction opportunities.



Construction and demolition project site at a former State office complex in Waterbury, VT.

Background and Summary of the Law

Nationally, up to one-quarter of the solid waste landfilled is from building construction and demolition debris. In Vermont, as of 2011, it was estimated that nearly 200,000 tons of C&D waste was generated at jobsites, and very little of this sizable quantity was diverted to reuse or recycling. As programs for “blue bin” recyclables have become institutionalized, and more attention shifts to composting efforts and mandatory food scrap separation, most C&D waste continues to be landfilled. Until recently, C&D has not been the focus of national nor state waste reduction efforts. Act 175 is a concrete step in keeping valuable materials in the C&D waste stream out of landfills by:

- encouraging the development of a C&D recycling infrastructure,
- requiring the recycling of certain prevalent and valuable components of the C&D waste stream,
- creating a stable supply of these recyclable components that will foster and support end-use markets.

What is “architectural waste”?

- Drywall
- Asphalt shingles
- Scrap metal
- Clean wood
- Plywood
- Oriented-Strand Board

The law considers “architectural waste” as a subset of construction and demolition waste, comprised of “discarded drywall, metal, asphalt shingles, clean wood, plywood, and oriented-strand board (OSB),” and targets these initial materials for reuse and recycling.

Beginning on January 1, 2015, a commercial project that generates more than 40 cubic yards—or about one large roll-off container—of architectural waste is required to bring that waste to an architectural waste recycling facility if there is one located within 20 miles. The waste must be transported to the facility within 20 miles, or another recycling facility of the contractor’s choice, unless no market for the particular components exists. This requirement may be satisfied by transporting the waste to an out-of-state facility that will recycle the architectural waste. As with any waste stream, the generator should limit the inclusion of any of hazardous materials in the architectural

waste. The Agency will be working with architectural recycling facilities to ensure that any hazardous materials are properly identified and managed.

Architectural Waste Recycling Facilities in Vermont

The Agency does not certify facilities as “architectural recycling facilities,” but rather designates existing solid waste facilities as such if they collect and market architectural waste components. These facilities and a host of other transfer stations that may accept architectural waste may be found in the Solid Waste Management Program’s searchable map, accessed from the State’s [Architectural Waste webpage](#). The Program expects that the number of architectural recycling facilities will rise over time with growing markets, competition, and increases in operational efficiency.



An example of separated asphalt shingles from one of Vermont’s architectural waste recycling facilities. The shingles are most likely to get recycled into asphalt for road paving projects.

Additional C&D-related facilities and entities such as deconstruction firms, used building material stores, asphalt, brick and concrete (ABC) recyclers, scrap metal recyclers, and other C&D resources and services will also be added to the map on an on-going basis starting January 1, 2015.

Beyond Act 175

Act 175 targets a small fragment of the entire C&D waste stream: specific architectural waste items generated from large projects, in particular areas of the state near certified facilities. Act 175 can be viewed as a stimulus for raising awareness amongst designers, developers, contractors, waste haulers, and the public at large, of the amount of C&D waste being produced and the variety of tools and techniques for reducing that amount. Foremost, in keeping with the vision outlined in the [2014 Vermont Materials Management Plan](#), is to consider C&D debris *as valuable material*, not waste. Materials that go into construction projects ought to be used sustainably throughout their life cycles in order to prevent the generation of waste, and consequently adverse impact on the environment and economy.

The greatest opportunity to prevent waste begins at the outset of the building project. From an architect's conceptual design for institutional buildings, to homeowner conversations with their builder, planning for waste reduction should begin at the earliest stages of the project. For example, property owners can rehabilitate older buildings instead of building new ones; build smaller buildings using standard dimensions; and use environmentally preferable and durable products. All of these planning measures prevent waste from being generated in the first place. Additionally, if waste reduction options are considered at the conception of the construction project and thoughtfully incorporated into the written documents that direct it, more of the waste generated will end up reused and recycled. Only when the owner, designer, contractor, and waste hauler have a written understanding of best waste prevention practices to be used throughout the project, will waste prevention and diversion be maximized.



Separated clean wood piling up in roll-off container at the former State office complex in Waterbury, VT.

The Agency highly encourages written “construction waste management plans” for any demolition or construction projects of significance, because it has found that planning for waste reduction is crucial to its success. A written, well thought out, job-specific plan, will reduce the amount of waste that needs to be disposed of, and can save

money. An effective waste reduction plan should list each waste material type, the estimated quantity, and outline what is to become of that waste material once it is generated. It is advantageous for the major directives of the plan to be incorporated into contract specifications.

The ANR has a template construction waste management plan on our [C&D webpage](#) and we would be happy to provide assistance on developing a site specific plan. **Note:** “Construction waste management plans” are actually **required** for any project involving more than 5,000 square feet of demolition or new construction as part of an Act 250 land use permit application.

Getting Assistance

The DEC Solid Waste Program is committed to working cooperatively with businesses, waste haulers, facilities, and all those involved in construction and demolition on reducing the landfilling of this waste stream. The program can provide technical assistance, and will be developing educational materials, such as handouts, flyers, posters that will be gradually available on the [C&D Resources web page](#). The program welcomes your questions and feedback; call James (Buzz) Surwilo at (802) 522-5056.

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