

# CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION RECYCLING®

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Evergreen Recycling rides the green building wave to the top of Nevada's mixed C&D recycling market.

## the green STANDARD

# THE GREEN STANDARD

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Las Vegas is something of a bright spot in an otherwise lackluster construction market. In spite of month after month of dismal national construction reports, Las Vegas continues to bustle with nonresidential building activity. Old properties are being cleared, making room for new development, and the city's hotels and casinos seem to function under a constant cycle of renovation.

Over the past 10 years, Evergreen Recycling has capitalized on this busy market—growing from a simple dump-and-pick operation to a 50,000-square-foot materials recovery facility (MRF) with a 120,000-tons-per-year throughput.

Company President Rob Dorinson says several factors are contributing to the rising interest in C&D recycling, which has helped Evergreen grow to operate the largest facility of its kind in Southern Nevada. "The recycling industry is booming, and C&D is getting particular attention," he says.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Dorinson started his career on the academic path. After earning his bachelor's degree in history from the University of California at Berkeley, he made a quick foray into post-graduate studies. "I lasted one day in the master's program," he recalls. Once he decided a life in academia wasn't for him, Dorinson turned to construction to fulfill a desire to work outside.

In charge of a custom home building business in Las Vegas, Dorinson was inspired to look into recycling as a business opportunity when he observed his waste hauler separating recyclables from the C&D materials being hauled away from Dorinson's construction jobs.

Evergreen began as a small dump-and-pick operation. "We literally started with two trucks," Dorinson says. Now, the company has nearly 60 employees and a new \$15-million MRF, which celebrated its grand opening in 2007.

The C&D sorting system, designed and installed by Lubo USA of Stamford, Conn., has given Evergreen the ability to process a wide variety of C&D material efficiently and on a large scale. The company handles materials with readily accessible markets, such as concrete, ferrous and nonferrous metal, asphalt and plastics, cardboard and paper as well as some of the more troublesome offerings from the mixed C&D stream, including drywall, shrink film, carpet and padding.

Taking a creative and aggressive approach to seeking out markets for some of the more challenging material is key to success in C&D recycling, Dorinson says. "We can't create markets, but we can find them," he says.

Dorinson credits his sales team for finding outlets for even some of the hardest to market material, including a local consumer of recycled drywall. "It's about putting the right people in the right place," he says.

In an industry with notoriously high turnover, finding and keeping the right people in the first place is also a priority for Dorinson. "You recognize strengths and promote from within," he says. "For example, our CEO, Len Christopher, has been here since the beginning. People work their way up." Dorinson has found this business model works because it provides employees with the opportunities to grow within the organization. "The longer someone stays, the more they have at stake," he says. Fostering that kind of

care among employees is what leads to long-term success, Dorinson adds. "It's about distributing my passion," he says. "You have to support your employees as an executive. They're there to keep my promises, so I have to give them the tools to do their jobs."

With the many opportunities and challenges facing the mixed C&D recycling industry, Dorinson says having a solid team behind him is more important than ever.

## **FOLLOWING LEED**

Interest in recycling C&D material is on the rise, and not just in Evergreen's Southern Nevada region. Dorinson says the "green" movement is piquing interest in C&D recycling across the country, both economically and ecologically speaking. "There are a lot of things contributing—it's the cost of what commodities are and the cost of what we have to pay to extract virgin material," Dorinson says. "There's a direct cost to society for that. It's imperative that we put these materials back to use."

Not only are recyclers seeing green in soaring commodity prices, but the green building movement is also having an impact. Evergreen is a member of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), which established the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating system. As a member company, Evergreen has witnessed the green building movement's effect on C&D recycling from the inside. Evergreen has worked on several LEED-certified projects, helping companies achieve certification with construction waste management points earned by recycling C&D material. Some of the company's LEED projects include the Lied Animal Shelter, the Molasky Corporate Center and MGM's CityCenter project (see sidebar "A Grand Scale,").

However, the buzz around C&D recycling and boom markets for recyclable commodities comes at a price, Dorinson says. Market conditions are rife for startups that don't quite live up to their promises, which could mean trouble for the industry in the future, he says. "The non-compliant recyclers could be a big problem in the industry. Companies are relying on them for LEED points, and if they are not living up to their promises and recycling claims, those points will be called into question. The credibility of the industry is at stake."

To stand out from potentially dubious competition that wins customers with pricing below what the market can bear, legitimate recyclers must strive to provide value-added service, Dorinson says.

## **THE EXTRA MILE**

When it comes to its approach to service, Evergreen strives to differentiate itself by focusing on the personal element of customer service.

"With nonverbal communication in this day and age, people can never be certain their message got there," Dorinson says. "We make sure there's a human voice. That human touch means so much, people crave that. It's a lost art—direct personal communication."

In addition to focusing on how it services its customers, Evergreen Recycling is also looking to expand the services it offers. Dorinson says the new facility was built with that expansion in mind and he is looking to install a second sorting line by the end of 2008 to process commercial recyclables, including metals, plastics and paper.

By accepting a wider variety of material, Dorinson says he hopes that Evergreen will be better suited to provide all his customers' recycling needs. "Companies are saying 'We want to be green,' and we want to be the first company people think of when they decide they want to recycle," he says.

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