

In California there is approximately 3.8 million tons of wood waste (not including yard clippings) entering the waste stream every year!

About thirty percent of California's solid waste stream from wood consists of used lumber, wood trim, shipping pallets, and organic materials like trees, branches, leaves, grass, tree stumps, food scraps, and crop waste after harvest.

Organic waste, which includes wood waste, is both an opportunity and a hurdle for compliance with the fifty percent waste diversion requirement.

Much of the organic waste can be made into compost, mulch, or other products that help in soil revitalization, erosion control, and water conservation. Most of the organic waste can be diverted from the landfill and recycled into an economically positive solution.

SOUND BITE: Ken Decio, Waste Prevention and Market development (CIWMB). “Are you overwhelmed with wood waste? We think one of the best ways to manage wood waste is to chip it and turn it into mulch. Mulch helps conserve water, control weeds, reduces erosion and slowly adds nutrients to the soil. If you would like to find out more about managing wood waste, visit the Board’s website at www.ciwmb.ca.gov.”

Casings, banisters, molding, and large timbers from structures may be salvaged and reused as structural elements in new buildings. Please note, if lumber is to be reused as a structural element, it needs to be recertified by a lumber inspector. It might be cost effective to employ a certified lumber inspector who could grade the lumber for use on-site.

Wood treated with chemicals may need to be managed using alternative methods. The most desirable option for wood waste management would be for re-use.

Cut-offs and scraps generated during the framing and trimming stages make an excellent feedstock for engineered wood. This type of wood waste represents a highly desirable form of wood waste that processors are eager to obtain.

Recycled wood waste, or organics, can be used as feedstock for engineered woods, landscape mulch, soil conditioner, animal bedding, compost additive, sewage sludge, and boiler fuel.

SOUND BITE: Dan De Grassi, County of Santa Cruz. “We’re here at the County of Santa Cruz, Buena Vista landfill. One of the diversion programs that we offer right here is uh, wood waste and yard waste diversion. Um, we’re standing next to a pile of wood chips. This material is, uh, accepted at the landfill, wood, uh, pallets, lumber, dimensional lumber, only if it hasn’t been treated or painted in any kind, uh, so that basically it’s chemical-free. What we do with this material is grind it. We produce wood chips like this, uh, and then we also produce a finer material like this which is used as mulch. The wood chips are sold to a bio-fuel plant, which there are probably, uh, three or four in California. The mulch is sold to the public or to landscapers and that material is used for erosion control, uh, for landscaping purposes, water conservation. It basically saves the user money, it saves the County landfill space which, uh, ends up saving the public money as well.”

SOUND BITE: Dannye Casey, Fresno Dept. of Public Utilities. “Wood waste at a construction site like this can be reused and recycled as wood chips, composting, and it can be used as co-generation for electricity.”

To minimize disposal costs and potentially generate income, contractors should contact local wood waste processors and inquire about setting up drop boxes on site for wood waste scraps. Contractors could collect pallets and crates from the building materials packaging. There are usually several businesses listed in the phone directories, under "pallets" or "skids," that collect and remanufacture pallets.