

Recycling Certification Hits the Empire State

By Ray Kvedaras



Cooper Tank Recycling of Brooklyn, N.Y., has joined the nationwide list of certified C&D recycling facilities. Cooper is honored to be the first recycling facility in the state of New York to show the level of transparency required to qualify for RCI certification.

New York City is a complex, wonderful place; a world-class marvel of civil and social engineering. As one of the largest members in the city's private waste and recycling industry, our issues fall squarely within the sustainability sphere. We spend most of our day figuring out how to recycle things, recycle them better and minimize the cost of disposal for ourselves, our customers, the community and the environment. Recycling is an important responsibility, which now has to be taken more seriously by all the stakeholders of our great city after the introduction of the Mayor's Zero Waste goal.

That is why we chose to have our recycling rate certified by the Recycling Certification Institute, which independently verifies the USGBC-approved protocols of the CDRA-initiated process known as the Certification of Recycling Rates or CORR program. As Bill Turley will tell you (and if asked, he will tell you anything you want to know about recycling, plus a little more) there was a recognized need amongst the academics, trade associations and industry representatives that recycling had to "come clean," to rid itself of dubious claims and statistics, and move forward with an integrity that could be relied upon.

The CORR process, developed to ISO-level standards, is not for the faint hearted. RCI and their regional audit team know their stuff and are quite thorough, but the benefits are substantial, especially the additional LEED point available under the USGBC program MRpc87, which awards an extra point if the construction and demolition material is taken to a certified recycling facility. That is even more important now that V4 of the LEED program excluded Alternate Daily Cover material from the recycling calculation making it more difficult to achieve the 2 points allocation. So the RCI certification provides some added value to our customers — architects, builders and general contractors — and the opportunity

to regain a "lost" point. Indeed, the USGBC recognizes CORR as the only program that is worthy of this extra point.

In all, the process took around 12 months. After some preliminary work, we gained momentum after the recent CDRA conference in Nashville and were awarded our certification status at the end of August. In essence, the program checks all the inbound and outbound loads, verifying that they actually occurred, that the destinations and materials were recorded correctly. But it also looks at the standards of recordkeeping, the equipment installed and process flow, maintenance logs, QC procedures, personnel training and safety management, and permitting. It is more like a "business integrity" audit.

We also gained from the experience and have made a number of improvements to our internal procedures that will prove beneficial as we develop a rhythm for the monthly reporting. The RCI website, www.recyclingcertification.org/certified-facilities, provides instant online transparency for the owners, developers, architects, contractors, customers, regulators and politicians who all have a vested interest in promoting recycling.

RCI oversees a national certification program for C&D recycling facilities. RCI's "primary focus is on accurate recycling accounting to ensure that the recovery and recycling reports issued by certified facilities are real, verifiable, reproducible and reliable." We believe this is true, and this program will add to the professionalism of our industry. **C&D**WORLD



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