

UPDATES

Acquisitions

■ **Wastequip Inc.**, Beachwood, Ohio, has expanded west with the purchase of **McLaughlin Refuse Equipment Inc.**, Lockeford, Calif. The company says that McLaughlin Refuse's current management will continue to lead the company.

■ **Rice Lake Weighing Systems**, Rice Lake, Wis., has purchased assets of **Powell All-Steel Scales** of Jasper, Ala. Rice Lake will manufacture and distribute Powell's full line of scales.

Recycling Rates Dip

Communities may need to promote programs more.

LIKE THOSE WHO invest in the stock market, recycling-industry members may look back at the 1990s with something of a wistful attitude. Two organizations recently released aluminum can recycling rates that represented significant declines from the previous decade. Additionally, new statistics show that the percentage of glass bottles recycled in California has declined since the 1990s.

According to the Aluminum Association, Washington, D.C., the recycling rate for aluminum cans in the United States in 2003 was 50 percent, down from 53.3 percent in 2002. Meanwhile, the nonprofit Arlington, Va.-based Container Recycling Institute (CRI) calculated the 2003 U.S. can recycling rate to be 44.3 percent, a decline from 2002's figure of 48.4 percent. Both rates are a continuation of a general downward trend that began in the early to mid-1990s. For example, in 1992, the

Aluminum Association calculated a can recycling rate of 67.9 percent, and CRI calculated the rate to be 65 percent.

There are numerous reasons why beverage can recycling rates have declined, says Jenny Gitlitz, research director for CRI. With the scrap price for used beverage cans stagnating, there is a declining economic incentive for individuals to collect cans, she says. Also, increased away-from-home consumption means that cans are less likely to end up in residential curbside recycling programs, which actually have tripled during the past 12 years. Additional reasons include a decline in mobile buy-back centers and decreased mainstream media coverage of recycling, Gitlitz says.

Robin King, vice president of public affairs for the Aluminum Association, echoes many of Gitlitz's sentiments. He adds that municipalities often are not aggressively promoting

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curbside recycling programs because their states have created little urgency to achieve or exceed the 25 percent diversion rate goal set by the Washington, D.C.-based U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Gitlitz says one way to increase recycling is for more states to pass bottle bills, which require refundable deposits on beverage containers. Ten states currently have such laws (Hawaii will become the 11th in 2005), and they have beverage container recycling rates that range from 70 to 95 percent, she says. King says bottle bills, which typically offer consumers a nickel deposit for each can recycled, overestimate the financial value of cans, which he places at about one cent. The Aluminum Association prefers aggressive marketing of voluntary recycling programs

Increased away-from-home consumption means cans are less likely to end up in curbside recycling programs.

that emphasize the value of cans and recyclable materials, he says.

Meanwhile, California has revealed that its glass container recycling rate for 2002 was 52 percent, down from 54 percent the previous year and 75 percent in 1993. Roughly half the containers are consumed in restaurants and bars, and the majority are beer bottles, according to the state's Department of Conservation (DOC). The state is trying to help more bars and restaurants recycle.

California has a bottle bill, and the state estimates that the glass containers going to landfills each year are worth more than \$70 million in unclaimed deposits. While California's glass recycling rate has declined, it's still well above the national average, Gitlitz says, a dynamic she attributes to the bottle bill. — SU

UPDATES

Awards

■ **Waste Management Inc.**, Houston, has awarded **McNeilus Companies Inc.**, a subsidiary of **Oshkosh Truck Corp.**; **Volvo Construction Equipment North America Inc.**; and **Wastequip Inc.** its 2003 Total Customer Satisfaction (TCS) Awards. The awards are based on five factors: product and technology leadership, service and support leadership, quality, delivery and lead-time performance, and total cost performance.



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