

DRYWALL IN VERMONT

A 2002 *Vermont Waste Composition Study* visually estimated that drywall accounts for about 5% of the construction and demolition (C&D) waste stream. Other studies from around the country generally found a higher percentage, anywhere from 5-15%, with the majority falling within the 6-8% range. Drywall generated from demolition and drywall generated from new construction is an approximate even split. The most recent waste generation data (2007) from Vermont indicated that the state generates about 200,000 tons of C&S. This figure is presumed to be conservative as it does not consider C&D being generated in mixed waste loads. Assuming a 7.5% average percentage of drywall in C&D and 200,000 tons, Vermont easily generates approximately 15,000 tons of waste drywall each year; half demolition waste, and half new construction waste.

Once more, drywall is generated during a discrete time frame during construction and, if well managed, is free of contaminants and easy to handle. Further, drywall tends to exacerbate hydrogen sulfide emissions from landfills. More and more, disposal of the material is discouraged, and recycling encouraged.

In 2000, a report, *Gypsum Wallboard Recycling and Reuse Opportunities in the State of Vermont* was developed by the Agency of Natural Resources. Although nearly a decade since publication, the conclusions reached in the report continue to be valid, and, unfortunately, the opportunities remain unfulfilled. Almost all waste drywall generated in Vermont is landfilled. GP Gypsum of Newington, NH, accepts new drywall scrap for reprocessing, and does receive a small amount from Vermont; estimated to be 600 tons in 2008.

The Agency of Natural Resources is sponsoring a research project over the construction season of 2009 to study the feasibility of job-site land application of waste drywall. While shipment of scrap drywall back to the manufacturer may be practicable on large construction projects, that is not the case for small construction or renovation jobs. Waste drywall from construction of a new, single family home will be collected, processed and incorporated into the grounds in the vicinity of the home. Application rates will be varied and grass growth will be assessed. The research will include developing economic and logistic information.