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CHARACTERIZING CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION WASTES

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ABSTRACT

Construction and demolition (C&D) debris consists of wastes generated when new structures are built and when existing structures are renovated or demolished. Structures include all residential and nonresidential buildings as well as public works projects, such as highways, bridges, piers, and dams. Many state definitions also include trees, stumps, earth, and rock from the clearing of construction sites.

Since much of C&D debris is inert, solid waste rules in most states require a lower level of environmental monitoring than is required for other waste streams, including municipal solid wastes (MSW). As a result, there has been a lack of published information on the characteristics (i.e., quantity, composition, and management practices by source) of C&D debris.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in C&D debris, because it is recognized that this is one of the more voluminous waste streams and that significant savings in resources and landfill space can be realized by increasing efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials and products from this waste stream.

This presentation presents the results of a study completed in June 1998 for the United States Environmental Protection Agency that developed a methodology for characterizing a large segment of C&D debris, (i.e., the building-related wastes), and summarized the current waste management practices for this waste stream. The methodology used combines national Census Bureau data on construction industry activities with point source waste assessment (sampling and weighing) data to estimate the amount of wastes produced nationally.