

## **The most recycled material**

By David Goldstein, Ventura County PWA, IWMD

The most recycled material in Ventura County cannot be placed in your curbside recycling cart or in any commercial recycling bin. Nevertheless, concrete and asphalt, referred to in the waste management industry as “inerts,” are recycled in amounts larger than any other material and at a higher percentage than nearly any material. (A few items with higher recycling rates, for example, car batteries, also have a separate collection system).

Although inerts are recycled every day by nearly a dozen local facilities spread throughout Ventura County, the material does not belong in a curbside recycling cart or a commercial recycling bin for two reasons. First, inerts could injure sorters, damage sorting equipment, and contaminate recyclables if handled through our local processing system.

Secondly, weight limits on most containers preclude inerts. For this latter reason, concrete is also not suitable for curbside garbage carts, except in small amounts. Weight limits are often printed on the cart. Anything heavier can make the cart too heavy for the garbage truck’s automated truck arm to lift.

Instead, there are three main ways to recycle concrete. First, if you have only a single chunk of concrete under three feet in diameter (resulting, for example, from removing a basketball post from a driveway), some garbage collection companies will allow you to use your free annual bulky item collection allocation and will come to your home and load it into their lift-gate truck in response to your call. Second, if you have enough concrete to justify the cost, you might order a “low-boy” (short sided) roll-off box instead of a bin from your refuse collector. Costing about twice as much as a three-cubic-yard bin, not including per-ton charges, a roll-off is like the back of a truck. It rolls on and off a trailer attached to the truck’s cab.

If you can haul concrete yourself, another option is to bring the material to an inert recycling facility, which will crush it into small pieces for reuse as new road base. Some inert recyclers charge a flat fee (between \$80 and \$200) to accept loads of concrete or asphalt, and others charge by the size or weight of the load.

If you bring concrete to a landfill, keep it separate from other waste so it can be reused for on-site roads. The Simi Valley Landfill and Recycling Center charges for separated concrete only about half the price they charge for garbage.

City and County contracts with haulers and landfills also provide for free collection events or free disposal days. Inerts are often sorted from mixed roll-off bins of construction debris hauled from these events.