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New S.F. law requires construction companies to recycle

Bay City News Service

SAN FRANCISCO - A new city law mandating the recycling of construction materials took effect this week and it has already boosted production for several local waste-management companies.

The Construction and Demolition Debris Recovery Ordinance, introduced by Mayor Gavin Newsom and Supervisor Fiona Ma, took effect Saturday and requires that all contractors in the city send their waste to a certified facility instead of straight to a landfill.

Construction waste generated in San Francisco, which includes wood, metal, sheetrock, concrete, asphalt, bricks, cardboard and hard plastics, accounts

for more than 100,000 tons of landfill every year, according to SF Environment, the city's environmental agency.

Many in construction already reuse and scavenge materials or send their waste for recycling but Supervisors hope the ordinance, passed in February, will increase the amount of materials recovered by eight percent.

With the new law taking effect, workers at a Norcal Waste Systems, Inc. center have been working extra hard, according to spokesman Robert Reed.

Three crews sorted through 400 tons of waste today alone, and in the coming days a fourth crew will be added, Reed said.

There are at least ten facilities in San Francisco that accept waste for recycling, and several more are located throughout the Bay Area.

Only about 65 to 70 percent of construction waste is recyclable, according to Reed. Workers sort through the waste by hand as it rolls by on a conveyer belt.

They also use shaker screens and magnets to separate reusable materials.

Asphalt and concrete are crushed up to build new roads and sidewalks, metals can be melted down, and wooden materials can be chipped up and sent to power plants to generate energy.

