

San Antonio & Austin

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## Earth-friendly demolition

**E**arth-friendly demolition? Yes, the two can co-exist! This Earth Day, it's critical to witness just how far the demolition industry has come when it comes to environmental stewardship. According to the Construction and Demolition Recycling Association (CDRA), more than 583 million tons of recoverable construction and demolition materials are generated in the U.S. annually. Thanks to reputable demolition contractors, much of that waste is recycled and handled with the environment in mind.

"Most demolition contractors will engage in at least basic recycling of metals," says **Timothy Ramon**, president of **JR RAMON Demolition**, which has been providing commercial, residential, and industrial demolition and support services across Austin, San Antonio, and South Texas for more than 50 years. "But materials such as concrete, asphalt, asphalt shingles, gypsum wallboard, and wood are notoriously more difficult to recycle. Finding demolition contractors committed to responsibly recycling these materials isn't easy, but it's a commitment worth making."

And efforts don't stop there. Thanks to innovations and advancements, environmental stewardship can be extended from recycling to deconstruction and waste reduction in the following ways:

### Recycling

JR RAMON can now recycle 98% of materials calculated by weight from an average job site. This level of recycling can only be achieved by recycling the aggregate and inert materials mentioned above. One aspect, in particular, is making a big difference: recycling concrete block brick. JR RAMON operates its own San Antonio concrete crushing yard where the material is separated, crushed, cleaned, and then made available as an aggregate for resale. According to the CDRA, recycled concrete aggregate per-

forms better, is higher-yielding, and weighs 10-15% less than comparable virgin quarry aggregates. It's also a meaningful way to reduce landfill waste streams while minimizing the environmental impact of urban quarries.

### Deconstructing

Some demolition projects are spectacular displays of force. Others require extreme finesse. For these latter projects, deconstruction is an art form. In San Antonio, deconstruction projects are an environmental effort steered heavily by the Office of Historic Preservation. The Deconstruction & Reuse Program was launched in 2018 to recapture building materials from the waste stream and redirect them into our communities for reuse.

### Reducing Hazardous Waste

The third environmental priority for the demolition industry is in reducing pollutants and hazards to the environment during the demolition process. Demolition contractors can carry out this commitment in several ways:

- Properly categorizing, identifying, handling, and disposing hazardous waste, whether it be asbestos, lead, chromium, mercury, PCBs, or other dangerous materials.
- Pollution mitigation. Water conservation during dust collection and dust suppression on a demolition site, in particular, has become a top priority.
- Investments in cutting-edge technology for heavy equipment and vehicle energy efficiency and emission reduction. The adoption of electric and battery-powered equipment is one example.

As Ramon points out, though, there's one benefit that surpasses all others. "This is our community, too. Whatever we can do to preserve the environment is for the benefit, health, and safety of our families," he says. "That's why we champion these efforts." -cmw

