



NEWS

Fort Lewis to exceed Army mandate for handling demolition, construction debris

By **Brendalyn Carpenter, Sustainability Outreach Coordinator**

Published: August 3rd, 2006 02:00 PM

Roughly 300 Fort Lewis World War II era wood buildings are scheduled for removal over the next four years. The majority of the material will be salvaged or recycled rather than deposited in a local landfill.

Fort Lewis expects to exceed the Army Chief of Staff for Installation Management new mandate requiring a 50 percent diversion of non-hazardous construction and demolition debris generated by the removal of buildings, renovations, and construction on military installations.

"In fact, the contractor for this current project, MCS Environmental, is well on its way to achieving above 95 percent diversion," said Elizabeth Chien, Environmental Engineer, US Army Corps of Engineers Seattle District.

Chien wrote the contract for the removal of 12 buildings on North Fort Lewis, which includes two-story barracks, classrooms and a gym. It calls for a minimum 50 percent diversion rate with additional financial benefits for contractors achieving diversion ranges of up to 95 percent.

The installation has set the bar high with its first attempt at this new form of deconstruction that removes buildings in partitions rather than by demolition. The partitioned removal increases the contractor's ability to recover reusable and recyclable materials in a more efficient manner.

"The concept, 15 years ago, was to look at an old building as something nobody wants, smash it to the ground, and send it to the landfill," said Matt Schultz, project manager for MCS Environmental.

"Thankfully, the Army and the Corps of Engineers have recognized that, first of all, it costs us money to dispose of things in the landfill. Second, we're running out of real estate for landfills, so let's try to do deconstruction rather than demolition."

To be completely accurate, the work being done on North Fort Lewis is neither deconstruction nor demolition.

"One hundred percent deconstruction — pulling things apart board by board, nail by nail — is very expensive labor wise but the other side is traditional demolition where you don't save anything," Chien said. "So, you want to find that spot where you get maximum recovery without significant increase in cost."

Contractors say reaching this new standard requires a change in their approach to building removal. "Efficiency is the key," Schultz said. "We start off looking at a building and trying to understand what markets exist for what you're looking at."

Markets for the majority of material have already been identified. Porcelain bathroom fixtures, aluminum, steel, clean wood, concrete, brick and painted wood are all segregated on-site for future transport to reuse markets. Additional items such as roofing material, plastic, carpet and window glass will go to recycling. The remaining materials are distributed to alternative markets.

For example, two-by-fours, plywood, flooring materials, electrical power boxes and lights were donated to the detainee training facility on North Fort Lewis.

"We have a need for wooden structures that we can't purchase, so we're reusing the materials to build additional guard shacks and repair facilities and that way we don't cost the government any more money," Maj. Andrew Fairchok, the facility's Operations Officer, said.

One of the driving factors to finding alternative uses for some of the materials comes from people driving by the site and seeing something different from a typical demolition.

"When you do traditional demolition and all you do is turn old buildings into toothpicks and shreds and throw it in the bin, people look at that and say, 'it's garbage.' But when you do something like this, rather than seeing a pile of trash, people driving by see a resource," Chien said.

THE NORTHWEST GUARDIAN - To suggest story ideas or submit copy contact us at:
Building 2025, Fort Lewis, Washington 98422-9500 253-967-0171 or 253-967-0173
© Copyright 2005 Northwest Guardian | Feedback at: NWGEditor@thenewstribune.com