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Contractors are doing more to reduce raw materials by recycling demolition material

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Today all of us are inundated with information about Leadership Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) construction techniques, LEED certification and sometimes, even the advantages of LEED. We, like many contractors, are taking courses, training our employees and working towards the goal of ensuring that our customers have the benefits promised by LEED. Our customers are demanding it.

EnviroVantage has been working on environmental projects at Phillips Exeter Academy (PEA), Exeter NH for the past 20 years - removing lead paint, asbestos, mold or other microbials and, as part of a contracting team, renovating some of the marvelous old buildings on the campus.

Recently PEA re-opened the Phelps Science Center after many months of renovation by Shawmut Construction and its team that included EnviroVantage. As part of this award winning project, we recycled virtually every component of the building and its contents. In past years, a contractor performing selective demolition services might call for a 30 yard dumpster and quickly fill it. Now resources are more precious and so we embraced a new request. As an example of the level of commitment, the student desks we all remember filled each classroom and lecture hall at Phelps. They were broken down into the components of plastic desktops, the wooden seats and metal frames. Each group was then brought to a recycling facility. This activity complemented the sheetrock, cement, bricks, piping, electrical wire, metal structures and window glass that we typically recycle, in the case of Phelps a staggering re-use of over 90% of the original materials was enabled. At the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, EnviroVantage performed an unusual demolition project. We completely disassembled a large oven, 35' by 12' by 10', taking the whole device apart, separating the copper from the steel, cast iron from the brick and cement blocks. This effort provided the Navy with 100% of the components for recycling. Today, steel for recycling is approaching \$200 per ton, copper is out of sight, and manufacturers have learned that it is more expedient to produce cement blocks from recycled cement than having to use only basic ingredients. While not designated as a LEED project, the objectives were the same.

Today we have three projects underway at Concord Hospital. Pediatrics 2nd floor, pediatrics 4th floor and the cafeteria are all under renovation. Each contract requires us to separate out components so that the hospital can reach its goal of 80% reuse. Wiring, metal studs in the walls, sheetrock, plumbing fixtures, lighting fixtures, doors, windows, flashing, even screws and nails used to go from project to dumpster to land fill. Today our industry is reusing materials previously discarded. As a member of the National Demolition Association (EnviroVantage president Scott Knightly is on the NDA board of directors), we are a major part of the effort to improve recycling, NDA and its members are the national leaders in this effort.

Each project is an example of LEED, of the promise to do more with an ever reducing raw material.

The practice of recycling demoed material has been a constant at EnviroVantage for many years; it is just now becoming formally recognized.

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