"CLOSED" is a Relative Term

To most of us, CLOSED means we lock the door and walk away. When it comes to landfills, the Waste Management Department has a different definition of CLOSED. Long after a disposal site is CLOSED to the public, Waste Management staff are still managing the site.

They are busy designing final closure plans, determining waste decomposition, measuring moisture percolation and monitoring landfill gas. They are completing environmental studies and discussing final cover material. They are checking into cost estimates and ensuring environmental stability. They are inspecting, reporting, mitigating and considering all potential risks to the groundwater, surface water, air quality, local habitat ... even to the dirt surrounding the property.

While the site has reached its capacity, and no longer accepts waste for disposal, there's a great deal of work to be done long after operations cease. Post-closure maintenance is as time consuming as pre-closure operations. The work is different but the responsibility is equally as important.

To complicate matters, the Department must work in tandem with other environmental protection agencies to ensure safety compliance. It is not uncommon for staff to be in communication with the Environmental Health Department, The Regional Water Control Board, Cal Recycle, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife - to name a few.

From closing the gates to a state of FINAL CLOSURE can take years, hundreds of tests and millions of dollars. Herman Robbins, Waste Management's "Closure Dude" has been focused on closing landfills for more than a decade. His efforts have spanned the County with closures of the Arvin, Buttonwillow, Glennville, Kern Valley, Lebec, Lost Hills, McFarland-Delano sites and, of course, the China Grade Landfill in Bakersfield.

Closure requirements have presented great opportunities to improve closure procedures, test closure soil covers, and develop more cost effective and time efficient ways to get the job done. Most recently, a handful of Waste Management staff have worked on the FINAL CLOSURE procedures on four landfills: Arvin, Buttonwillow, China Grade and Lost Hills. Each location is unique in size and challenges.

Doug Landon, Waste Management Director, is extremely proud of the work completed by the Closure Division. "With regulations constantly changing, Herman's team has successfully developed compliance strategies and procedures to meet, or exceed, the legal requirements. They have worked hard to develop professional working relationships with agency staff - enabling clear discussion when a problem arises," said Landon.

Today’s Closure Division staff is more pro-active than ever. They seek to anticipate the job in front of them and set up strategies to accomplish the legal objectives in a more timely, cost-effective way.

When it comes to landfills, "CLOSED" can mean a lot of different things. For Waste Management staff, it means years of oversight and monitoring.

With so many agencies involved in the process, that can be a very long time.
Managing trash disposal is the primary focus of the Waste Management Department. In accomplishing that goal, there are environmental regulations that seemingly, have little to do with the disposal of waste. But ask the department's Habitat Conservation Plan Coordinator, Frank Bedard, he'll tell you that for every acre dedicated to trash disposal there are more reserved for habitat conservation. It's his job to oversee the process.

The California Endangered Species Act, combined with the Federal Act of the same name, is the foundation for Habitat Conservation Plans. In short, the Acts forbid WMD to "take" endangered species (plants or animals) during the course of normal operations. ("Take" is defined as: harrass, harm, pursue or kill etc.) Through time, the legislature conceded that it was nearly impossible to never "take" a plant or animal so they created an Incremental Take Permit. Bedard works under that permit for the benefit of all County Disposal Sites.

According to Frank, "A permit is needed to provide for lawful and incidental 'take'. The purpose is to ensure that 'take' is avoided and minimized to the maximum extent practicable and to compensate for any habitat lost due to operations. The County's permit was negotiated in 1997 and is good for 50 years." Upon approval of the permit, WMD developed "Avoidance and Minimization Measures". Failure to comply carries a maximum penalty of prison time and $50,000.

No small change - $$$.

It is because of the severe repercussions that Bedard takes his responsibility very seriously. Most of the County's landfills can be found in rural areas. It is because of this, that Waste Management spent nearly $1,000,000 to purchase land and secure a funding endowment in an Ecological Reserve. This property will be retained and managed, in perpetuity, as an important mitigation measure in exchange for the permit. The reserve is located on the west side of the County, is several thousand acres in size, and features a variety of endangered species in a safe, natural environment.

"In the San Joaquin Valley, Kit Foxes and Tipton Kangaroo Rats are the primary species of concern. I work with employees from the Endangered Species Recovery Program (ESRP) and it's their job to monitor the situation - in the field. I keep my eye on them while they keep their eye on the endangered species. It's both interesting and challenging in that we want to remain in compliance at all times. I'll do all I can so that the department won't ever see a violation," said Bedard.

And you thought Waste Management only did trash.

For Your Information

**Local Landfill Locations & Hours:**

**Bena Landfill**  
17 miles east of Bakersfield,  
off Hwy. 58, at Tower Line Road  
**Open Daily:** 8 am to 4 pm

**Boron Landfill**  
1/2 mile south of Boron,  
at 11400 Boron Avenue  
**Open:** Sun, Mon, Tues & Thurs: 12 pm to 4 pm  
Sat: 8 am to 4 pm  
**Closed:** Wednesday and Friday

**Mojave-Rosamond Landfill**  
5 miles south of Mojave, 1 mile east of Hwy. 14, at 400 Silver Queen Road  
**Open:** Sun, Wed and Fri: 8 am to noon  
Mon and Sat: 8 am to 4 pm  
**Closed:** Tues and Thurs

**Ridgcrest Landfill**  
5 miles southwest of Ridgcrest,  
3301 Bowman Road  
**Open Daily:** 8 am to 4 pm

**Shafer-Wasco Landfill**  
8 miles west of Shafter, off Lerdo Hwy.  
1 mile north of Scofield Ave at 16721 Scofield Ave  
**Open Daily** Sun: 10 am to 2 pm  
Mon - Sat: 8 am to 4 pm

**Taft Landfill**  
4 miles north of Taft, 1 mile north of Hwy. 119, at 13351 Elk Hills Rd.  
**Open:** Sun, Mon, Wed, Fri and Sat  
Sun: noon to 4 pm  
Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat: 8 am to 4 pm  
**Closed:** Tues and Thurs

**Tehachapi Landfill**  
12001 Tehachapi Blvd., Tehachapi  
**Open:** Sun, Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat  
Mon, Wed, Fri and Sat: 8 am to 4 pm  
Sun: 8 am to 12 pm  
**Closed:** Tues and Thurs

**Kern County Special Waste Facilities:**

**Metro Bakersfield Facility**  
4951 Standard Street, Bakersfield  
Thursday - Saturday 8:00 AM until 4 PM

**Mojave Facility**  
17035 Finnin Street at the Mojave Airport  
Next Scheduled Event: April 2, 2011  
9:00 AM until NOON

**Ridgcrest Facility**  
3301 West Bowman Road (Ridgecrest Landfill)  
Next Scheduled Event:  
10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

**NOTE:** All county sites are closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, 4th of July, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.
DIRECTOR'S CORNER

For the past several years, government has been working on a paradigm of doing more with less. Within Waste Management, we’ve shifted staffing and created efficiencies to deliver the same or a greater level of service to local communities.

Those days are over. Today, we are striving to deliver the same with less. We are seeking to maintain service, cap costs and deliver efficiencies. It’s taking the brightest minds with the best intentions to make this happen. I am proud of the Waste Management staff. They have risen to the challenge in an era of stagnated growth.

Looking forward, the staff’s ability to deliver the same level of service is eroding under additional governmental legislation. It appears that mandatory residential and commercial recycling are on the horizon. What this means to local business and residents is still unclear … but it won't come without cost. Our challenge is to implement the required programs in an efficient, cost-effective way.

From where I sit, this means we have to be more creative, more proactive in seeking mutually beneficial collaborations, and more communicative to the residents we serve. We have to look at the big picture and expand on public-private partnerships.

The GOOD NEWS is that the Board of Supervisors has always backed creativity in the arena of waste management. Their leadership in supporting new ways of delivering service has been a powerful tool for Waste Management staff. They have been fiscally conservative and community aware while recognizing the unavoidable State requirements placed upon the department.

The BAD NEWS is that each year, additional rules and regulations are handed down from the State - without a funding stream or a list of “Best Practices”. That said, I am confident that the WMD staff will rise to the occasion and lead the way to creative collaborations. It’s what we do. It’s how we work.

I am proud of that legacy and confident that, at the close of this year, Kern County Waste Management will once again meet the challenge. Ingenuity in Action: that's the new paradigm of government.

Save Your Cash. TARP YOUR TRASH!

Beginning August 1, 2010, the Waste Management Department began charging $5.00 per ton, with a $5.00 minimum per load fee, for vehicles that come to any Kern County disposal sites with an untarped or unsecured load.

In a survey, conducted at the site locations, it was determined that 57 percent of vehicles visiting county disposal facilities were untarped or unsecured. Trash and bulky items, from these loads, often blow or fall out of vehicles - littering the roads leading to disposal sites. The goal of the Unsecured/Untarped Load Fee is to achieve 100 percent compliance, which means that all vehicles transporting waste to county disposal sites will be properly tarped and secured.

County ordinance and state law requires that trash loads be secured and tarped or fines of up to $1,000 can be imposed on violators. Canvases and plastic tarps, rope and bungee cords are simple tools residents can use to completely cover and or secure their trash during transport.

"With the budget cuts we are implementing, we do not have the manpower to clean up the fly-away litter and bulky items found along our roadsides. We need residents to help us reduce litter by properly securing and taping their load before transporting it to a disposal site", said Doug Landon, Director of the Kern County Waste Management Department.

Since the program’s inception, gate attendants have seen an increase in compliance and a decrease in roadside litter - now that’s the right answer!
On Wednesday, December 1st, the Waste Management Department unveiled a new web site: www.kerncountywaste.com. Easy-to-find and understand, this updated resource is packed with vital information on waste management topics ranging from recycling to disposal sites, acceptance criteria to sewer operations, hazardous waste to educational opportunities.

Log on today, navigate through the site and learn about the programs and policies of waste disposal in Kern County. kerncountywaste.com - An easy, effective way to let you in on the topics of trash.