

## Construction Sweeping: Safely and Efficiently

In this article he did for Better Roads magazine, WorldSweeper.com's editor discusses the many factors to consider when hiring a construction sweeping contractor.



In many parts of the country, environmental considerations have in recent years become the top reason for sweeping construction sites. The United States Environmental Protection Agency cites dirt track-out by vehicles from construction sites as one of the leading causes of pollution. This is considered a serious problem because track-out transports sediment and/or polluted material to places where it can easily be washed into water bodies, violating the Clean Water Act. Typically, sweeping is the best way to achieve the results required under the Act.

EPA rules don't specify any particular techniques or machinery. Rather, the EPA's regulatory requirements dictate only that comprehensive pollution-prevention plans are in place for construction projects. Whatever structural and housekeeping efforts the plans call for must be implemented to have a positive impact.

Many individual states now have far more strict construction site regulations than those on the national level. The number of companies that offer quick-response and heavy-duty sweeping for the construction industry is relatively small. If you specify sweeping services for construction cleanup, make sure you hire a contractor that has construction sweeping experience, as well as the type of heavy-duty sweepers needed.

In most cases, these will be mechanical broom machines. That's because the transverse-broom action is needed to remove packed-down dirt and debris created on a construction site. In lighter debris situations, an air sweeper may be able to handle the job. If so, you can expect to pick up a larger proportion of the fine material, where a much higher portion of the total pollutants is contained.

A good analogy for construction sweeping, unlike routine parking area sweeping, is that it must be done like mowing a lawn — any missed areas spots will really be noticed. For that reason, it's vital to have a seasoned sweeper operator on any construction work, someone capable of achieving superb results under even the most demanding conditions. Especially with road milling, the sweeper's job changes hour-to-hour, and each jobsite location can pose a wide variety of new challenges.

Until recently, sweeping services required a hard sell to residential developments," Stauty says. "Now, these companies have become extremely concerned about complying with Phase II of the Clean Water Act because they know the statutes are being stringently enforced and don't want to be shut down, since that can be very expensive.

Most sweeping is still done with mechanical broom machines, and typical frequency is high enough that they do a good job. Although air-based sweepers are better for handling the small-micron material that creates dust, they can't handle packed-down mud and many of the larger items that are a natural



byproduct of construction waste. When there's been a long dry spell, though, air sweepers are sometimes a better choice, since trying to sweep the dried-out material with a mechanical broom sweeper creates an increased level of dust.

For most road contractors it makes more sense to hire a sweeping contractor, rather than purchase a sweeper for low-to-moderate usage. Sweepers are unique to maintain and repair, and operators need hundreds of hours at the controls before they are competent enough that you'd want them on a construction project of any size.

When you consider a sweeping contractor, make sure the person you talk with asks what



might be termed 'the standard questions.' They should want to know where they can get water [for dust suppression] legally, and they should ask about your debris disposal arrangements. Sweeping contractors typically want their machines to show up empty and leave empty.

When it comes to this type of sweeping, perhaps the single

most important thing to find out is what the local government inspector wants to see as a finished product. This may range from no requirements to something as stringent as there being no visible dirt trail emerging from a jobsite. Having this information will determine the type of sweeper(s) needed to do the job, as well as the frequency with which they'll be needed.

Today's increasingly stringent environmental laws, and associated penalties, have made compliance a no-nonsense issue. Especially when state or federal money is used to fund a construction project, the current penalties for noncompliance with runoff regulations can be significant.



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