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## County event urges contractors to boost recycling

By Brian Foley, STAFF WRITER

SAN LEANDRO — East Bay contractors are talking trash.

Dozens converged Wednesday afternoon at the San Leandro Library to discuss how recycling can greatly reduce expenses.

"There isn't anything coming off these jobs that is garbage," said Patrick Hayes, a construction recycling expert for the city of Oakland. "This isn't like household trash. It isn't going to rot and make things stink."

The education fair was organized by the Alameda County Waste Management Authority and its Web site, Stopwaste.org, as part of an overall effort to meet the county's recycling level of 75 percent — one of the most stringent in the state. Construction and demolition waste account for about 20 percent of the county's waste stream.

Ann Ludwig of Stopwaste.org said contractors require convincing that recycling reduces costs.

"With residents, the recycling services are provided to them and they don't have a choice" to not recycle, she said. "The challenge with contractors is that they have all different kinds of materials with different jobs. Time is always an issue with them, so we need to direct them." She added that it's easy to just throw items away.

Hayes said recycling some building materials costs \$6 a ton, while trashing them can be as much as \$85.

"Ten years ago it was hard to get contractors to do anything," he said. "Now companies are very receptive."

Prior to the fair, David Robinson of Oakland-based Santilli and Forster Construction said he "wasn't so sure" it saved money.

He was overheard

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by contractor Michael Luque of Oakland, who quickly said his company has saved thousands of dollars over the past two years.

"We went down from \$12,000 to \$9,000 in the first month just by recycling things like cardboard," Luque said. "And we are still coming down."

Hayward, San Leandro and San Lorenzo all have adopted goals of reducing construction and demolition waste by 50 percent. But the county is now focused on a 75 percent overall recycling goal.

"It is ambitious," Stopwaste.org's Ludwig said. "But if we focus on this — food waste and yard waste — we can get there."

Booths also were set up by different cities and jurisdictions at the event to address varying recycling standards.

For example, Hayward offers a \$10 per ton rebate and requires 100 percent recycling of asphalt and concrete. In contrast, Castro Valley has a 50 percent recycling requirement.

"We try to make it easy for them and to educate them," said Naomi Yee of the Castro Valley Sanitary District.

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California accounts for 12 percent of the nation's 136 million tons of construction and demolition waste annually, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

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