



Alive!



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PUBLIC WORKS

Man vs. Trash

Lessons learned about
efficiency and the environment
at Sanitation's Central LA
Recycling Transfer and Station.

**SEE
PAGE 6**

Paul LeBel, Acting
Solid Waste Disposal
Superintendent II,
Public Works, on the
floor of the massive
waste transfer
station.

Alive! photo by Angel Gomez.



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Barbara Arenzana purchased
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READ HER STORY, PAGE 15

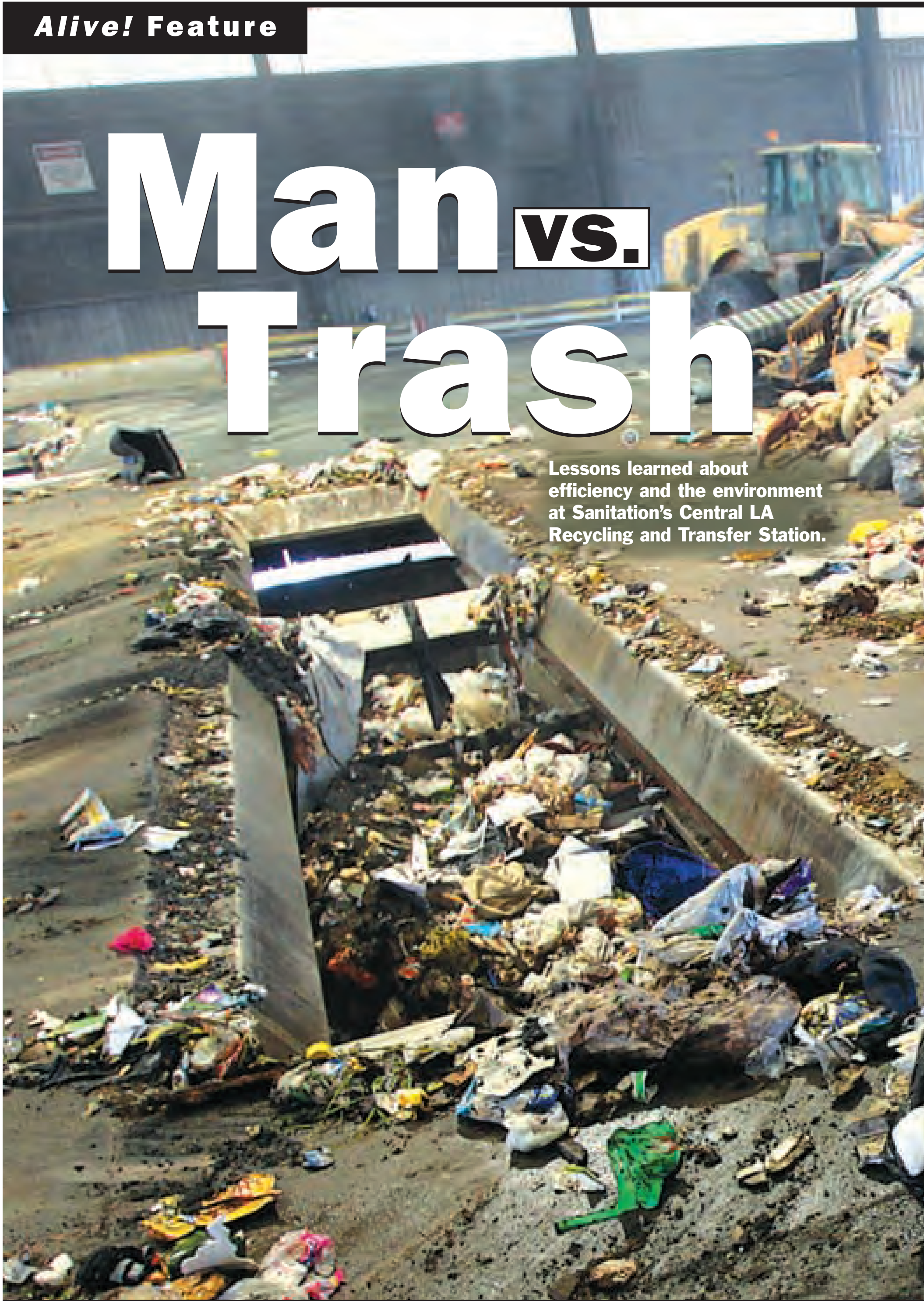
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Alive! Feature

Man **vs.** Trash

Lessons learned about efficiency and the environment at Sanitation's Central LA Recycling and Transfer Station.





Paul LeBel, Acting Solid Waste Disposal Superintendent II, Public Works, on the floor of the massive waste transfer station.

Alive! Feature

Man **vs.** Trash

Photos by Angel Gomez, Club Member Services Director, and Club Staff

Where does your trash go after the curbside truck takes it from you? Most of it goes to a landfill. (Your recyclables and yard waste go in separate shipments. *You do recycle, don't you?*)

But before it gets there, it goes through a transfer station, where it is transferred from the familiar green trucks to large tractor-trailers, which take your trash the landfill in much greater amounts.

Transfer stations – like the City's largest one, the downtown Central L.A. Recycling and Transfer Station (CLARTS) – may seem simple in concept, but they teach big lessons in efficiency and the environment.

On Sept. 16, *Alive!* paid a visit to CLARTS to get a first-hand report of how this massive but simple facility is working toward building a better Los Angeles.

What is a Transfer Station?

A transfer station in waste terminology is a location that facilitates the intermediary transport trash as opposed to people. CLARTS serves to temporarily store refuse (trash disposed in the black bin) collected throughout the City before a larger truck is ready to pick it up and transport it for the long haul to the nearest landfill (as the City's own landfills are all closed, the destinations are private landfills).

About CLARTS

In 2004, the City of Los Angeles purchased Central L.A. Recycling and Transfer Station from its previous owner. As the recycling operations done at the facility have ceased, the City continues to operate the facility as a transfer station.

The City took over full operation and management of the facility in January 2005. CLARTS receives approximately 2,600 tons per day of waste. About 1,600 tons per day of black bin refuse are delivered to CLARTS from the South Los Angeles and North Central wastesheds through the City's curbside collection program. Another 1,000 tons per day are from private/commercial users of the facility.

City refuse collection trucks dump the waste onto the tipping floor at CLARTS. The tipping floor at CLARTS has two subterranean tunnel ports designed to allow transfer trailers to be top-loaded with refuse from the tipping floor by gravity. Loaded transfer trailers transport refuse to the designated landfills.

The capacity of a transfer trailer is approximately 22 tons. Each refuse collection vehicle has a payload capacity of about nine tons. Refuse collection vehicles operators utilizing the local transfer station can discharge their loads and quickly return to their routes rather than hauling their loads over a long distance to the landfill with a limited load capacity.

More than 100 transfer trailer loads are shipped out of CLARTS to landfills within the Southern California region.

Floor Rebuilt

Earlier this year, the entire floor of the transfer station was rebuilt, and CLARTS is operating at full capacity. The floor rebuilding project was conducted in four phases so as to minimize the disruption to the normal operation of the facility. Work began in mid- February and was completed in August.

For more information on how the transfer station works, see "How It Works" on page 10. ■

Lessons learned about efficiency and the environment at Sanitation's Central L.A. Recycling and Transfer Station.



Three curbside refuse collection trucks line up on the floor of the transfer station and dump their contents.

Facts

Central L.A. Recycling and Transfer Station (CLARTS)

CUSTOMERS SERVED:

The City of Los Angeles curbside collection program, the general public and the commercial industry.

ADDRESS:

2201 E Washington Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90021

PHONE:

(213) 763-1918

FACILITY MANAGER:

Paul LeBel, Acting Solid Waste Disposal Superintendent II, Construction Services

STAFFING:

23 employees, including maintenance laborers, equipment operators, scale attendants, equipment supervisors, a superintendent, and administration personnel.

SIZE:

Land- 9.14 acres or 398,138 square feet
Transfer station building- 55,000 square feet
Parking- 100,000 square feet

FACILITY:

Acquired by the City: April 2004
Year built: 1989

PERMITTED CAPACITY:

4,025 tons/day

PRESENT CAPACITY:

2,000 tons/day

WASTESHEDS (2008-09 data):

City Waste- North Central: 733 tons/day
South Los Angeles: 861 tons/day

Private waste- 200 to 300 tons/day

TRUCK TRAFFIC VOLUMES (at present 2,000 tons/day):

Inbound- 300 trips (6.5 tons/load)
Outbound- 90 trips (22 tons/load)

HOURS OF OPERATION:

5 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday,
closed on major holidays.



A front loader pushes trash, which has been dumped out of a curbside (green) truck, into the slot for loading into a big rig a floor below.



Lorenzo Terry, RCTO II, 6 years, getting re-weighed as he leaves the transfer station.



THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW

Saving Time and Money

On Sept. 13, Club CEO John Hawkins interviewed Paul LeBel, Acting Solid Waste Disposal Superintendent II, who's in charge of the Central L.A. Recycling and Transfer Station just south of downtown. The interview took place in his office.

Alive!: Thanks for giving us a tour and explaining how this facility works. How long have you worked here?

Paul LeBel: I've been here for three years.

How long have you worked for the City?

Paul: Twenty-three years.

How did you get in to this?

Paul: I kind of volunteered to come and run the facility when the other superintendent had to go out.

What were you doing before this?

Paul: I was superintendent of a landfill.

Which one?

Paul: Toyon Canyon and Lopez Canyon.

Okay, that's good experience. Now, in your own words, describe the function of this transfer station.

Paul: This building is a collection and transfer hub. We take in anywhere from 2,200 to 2,400 tons of trash a day from independent and the city rubbish vehicles, and then put it into 18-wheelers and transport it to the landfill.

How many landfills do you transport to?

Paul: Three landfills.

There's no picking station here. Nothing gets filtered out of here.

Paul: Right. Nothing gets filtered out here. There's no recycling going on.

What's the management reason why you have a transfer station?

Paul: It is a large savings to the City. I bring in approximately 300 vehicles a day from the curbside program that collects the trash in front of the houses, and reduce that down to a hundred vehicles [going out], so that is a big savings versus putting all those trucks on the freeway. Instead of 300 there's only a hundred making that long trip.

The main thing about this place is the huge cost savings to the City.

If the mayor was sitting here, what would you tell him? How would you describe the cost savings?

Paul: The benefit is not putting 300 trucks on the road, times that amount of fuel, times that amount of smog.

Taking 300 trucks off the road.

Paul: Essentially yes. I'm looking at it from the other way, but yes, we're taking those 300 trucks and we're shortening their distance, anywhere from half to a tenth of what they'd be going to the landfill, and then we're reducing the time that they have to wait, because we're held to a standard here that no truck can wait for more than 15 minutes, on average. We're looking for an average of no more than 15 minutes, and we do achieve that.

When does it get busy in here?

Paul: Everybody arrives here at 9:30 [a.m.], and the numbers coming in are huge at that time.

That's the busiest time of your day?

Paul: Correct. And I have real heavy days, which are Wednesday and Monday.

Why Wednesday?

Paul: It's when their routes are big.

After the holidays, is that a big time?

Paul: Unpredictable.

With all that wrapping paper.

Paul: You'd think you'd see that, but it kind of comes [later] in January. In the middle of January, you say, "Boy, tonnages have ramped up," and then you see it gradually plateaus back down [again].

This is the largest transfer station the City runs. Correct?

Paul: Correct. It's the *only* one the City runs.

Does everything come here, or do other green curbside trucks go directly to landfills?

Paul: There are some [curbside trucks] out in the Valley that are closer to the landfill than to here, so they go directly to the landfill.

What about the Harbor area?

Paul: The harbor yard goes to another transfer station, but it's not City owned.

You just contract that out.

Paul: Yes.

What percentage of the City sanitation curbside trucks come through this facility?

Paul: I don't know the number. But I would say it is probably close to half.

If you didn't have this facility, all of those curbside trucks would have to go all the way to the landfill.

Paul: Correct. You would have much more pollution and a lot more hours in driver time. And 300 vehicles arriving at the landfill creates huge lines.

Do the trash trucks have more than one route per day? They leave here and then go back and do another one?

Paul: Yes. That's done by the collection side, but they generally do probably a couple routes a day.

They wouldn't be able to do more than one if they ...

Paul: ... if they had to go all the way to a landfill.

So that's another efficiency. Where do you ship the trash?

Paul: [We used to ship to] our own landfill, Lopez Canyon.

That's way out.

Paul: Yes, and that was closed in '95.

Where do you go now?

Paul: We [ship] to Sunshine Canyon. We haul to El Sobrante landfill, which is out in Riverside.

Some of these trucks are going out to Riverside?

Paul: Yes. And there's one that's actually farther, in Lancaster.

That's a long way.

Paul: Yes. We ship 600 tons a day to El Sobrante landfill in Riverside.

Does the city own landfills?

Paul: Only closed ones. The last open [City] landfill was Lopez Canyon.

Now the City contracts with private landfills?

Paul: Correct.

Who are your regulatory agencies? Who oversees you?

Paul: The LEA, the Local Enforcement Agency [with the City]. Then we have the county, which watches what we do. And we have the state, which permits us. So we're watched by everybody.

You say it's open to the public, but can someone with a pickup truck ...

Paul: Absolutely.

Really. Do people ...

Paul: Anybody can come here and dump.

And pay for it.

Paul: Yes.

Can you pay for less than a ton?

Paul: No. Our minimum charge is \$52 for a ton or under.

They're basically paying 52 bucks minimum.

Paul: Yes.

"The biggest lesson to be learned is to recycle at the home level, to use your blue and green cans and recycle your aluminum and plastic so it doesn't go into the landfill."

— Paul LeBel

Alive! Feature



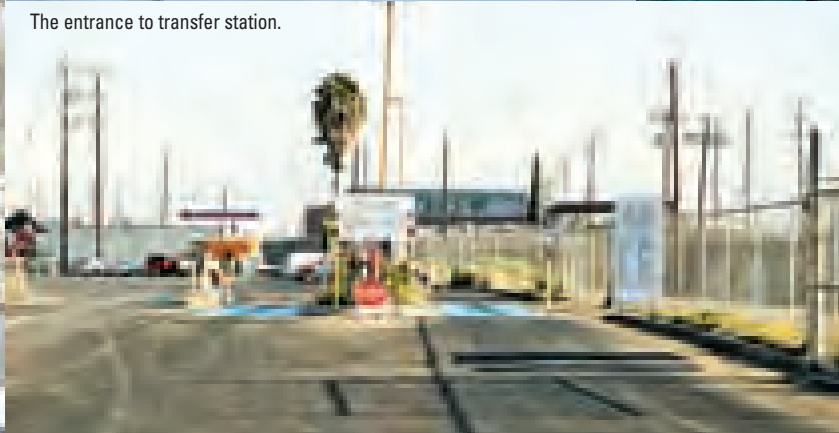
Semi-trucks come in through the underground tunnel. Trash will be pushed through these holes, and with the help of gravity, the trash drops into the truck bed below.



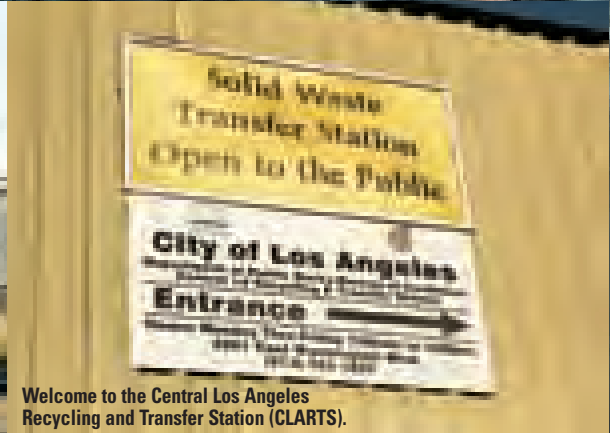
Electronic equipment removed from the garbage piles is loaded into a truck for proper disposal.



At the weigh house: Chris Bell, Truck Operator, 24 years of City service, driving the sanitation truck and being greeted by Celia Medina, Maintenance Laborer, 6 years.



The entrance to transfer station.



Welcome to the Central Los Angeles Recycling and Transfer Station (CLARTS).

How It Works

Here's a step-by-step explanation of how the City's Central L.A. Recycling and Transfer Station (CLARTS) works.

1



Opening for the Day

CLARTS opens at 5 a.m. each working day. The tipping floor has been cleaned meticulously the night before. The "misters" are actually odor neutralizers.

3



Dumping Onto the Tipping Floor

Once the curbside refuse collection trucks have been weighed, they drive onto the main floor of the facility, where they dump their contents.

2

Curbside Trucks Arrive

Sanitation's curbside refuse collection trucks begin arriving when they are full at the end of a route. First stop: the scale, where each truck is weighed. The facility maintains an empty-weight database of each City vehicle; by weighing the truck full, personnel can easily determine how much trash each vehicle is delivering.

Keeping track of the weight of the trash is very important for efficient management of landfill space.



Trash trucks from independent businesses or the general public are welcome to dump their garbage here, too.



Man vs. Trash

A Caterpillar front loader tamps down the trash after the semi leaves the tunnel.



A semi-trailer lines up, waiting for instructions to enter the subterranean tunnel.

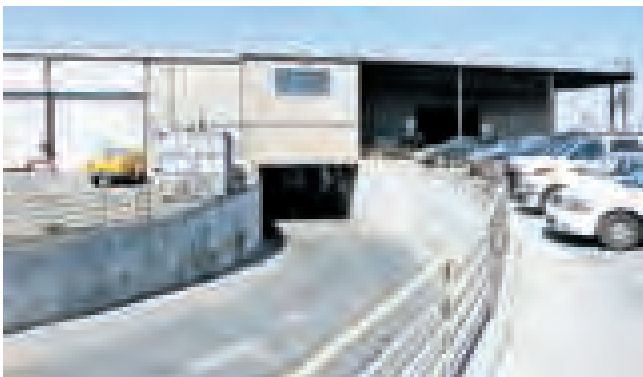
4 Meanwhile, Here Come the Big Rigs

While the City's curbside trucks are arriving, so are the bigger tractor-trailers. Owned by private contractors, these trailers are made of aluminum to save weight.

These rigs are not weighed yet.

Upon arrival, they drive into a lane that takes them directly under the main/tipping floor of the facility.

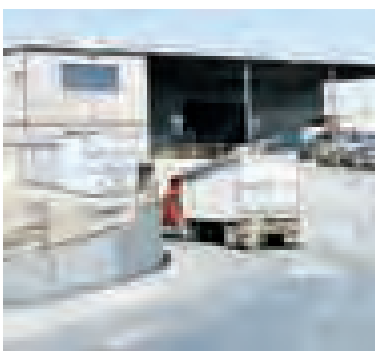
They drive into the down ramp ...



.. where they stop and remove their cloth covering.



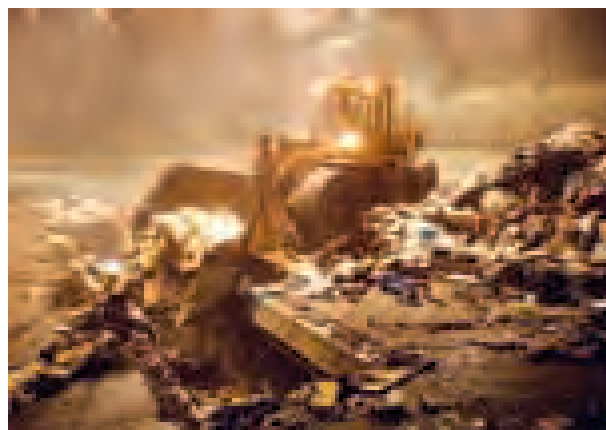
By radio, the facility's dispatcher gives the tractor/trailer driver clearance to enter the space below the tipping floor.



5 Transferring the Trash

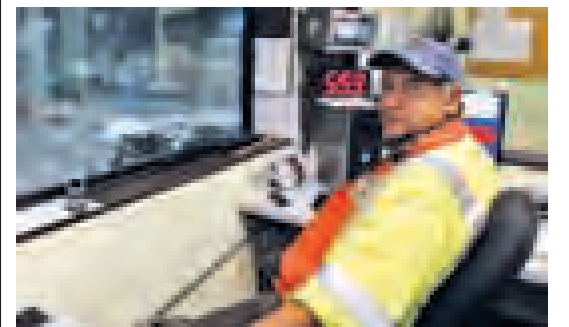
Once a trailer has been secured down below, the front loaders begin pushing the mounds of garbage into the slots in the floor, where gravity does its thing, and the trash falls into the trailer waiting down below.

A digital readout hanging from the ceiling tells the loader operators how much the load weighs. When the load has reached the maximum, the dispatcher tells the loaders to stop.



6 The 'Quarterback'

Sitting in a second-floor office overlooking the entire tipping floor is the facility dispatcher, who coordinates all trash truck and trailer movement into and out of the facility. The dispatcher also checks the final weight of each trailer, and determines which landfill has sufficient capacity for that load. Then, by radio, the dispatcher informs the trailer driver that his load has reached its capacity; tells the driver to move out and to which landfill the driver should take the load. All of the movements, weights and landfill destinations are recorded into a computer database.



7



Out She Goes

After the loaded trailer exits from the subterranean lanes, the truck stops, and a separate machine pushes the load down to maintain road safety and low air resistance.

After the load has been smoothed, the trailer pulls the fabric cover over the load, and the truck is on its way to the landfill designated by the dispatcher.



8 Back to the Streets

Once their load has been delivered to the transfer station, the curbside collection trucks leave the facility and head back to the mean streets of the neighborhoods, collecting more of our trash.



Meet the team that makes all this happen!

SEE PAGE 13

Alive! Feature



A curbside refuse collection truck enters the facility with a full load and is weighed.



A front loader pushes the trash on the transfer station floor.

THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW — continued

Is that expensive?

Paul: No. We're actually cheaper than most of the transfer stations around here.

Lessons to be Learned

What are the lessons people can learn from seeing what happens here at CLARTS? Can they reduce their waste, and make sure that everything gets separated? We saw things out there that could have been recycled but were not. Is that one of the lessons I can learn, to make sure I do recycle everything before it leaves my house?

Paul: The biggest lesson to be learned is to recycle at the home level, to use your blue and green cans and recycle your aluminum and plastic so it doesn't go into the landfill.

Roughly, what percent would you say could be recycled of what you see in a given day?

Paul: I'd say at least 20 percent of it.

Do you recycle at home? You, personally.

Paul: Yes. Yes, I do.

Today we saw some furniture. Are the bulky items supposed to go to a separate facility, or does that come through here too?

Paul: That comes through here.

By design?

Paul: Yes.

People call a separate truck to come by and pick something up, and that ends up here.

Paul: Yes. We run them over until they're all compacted up. You'll actually see them separated out.

We have to make a certain tonnage in each truck that leaves here [for the landfill]. The magic number on that scoreboard [scale] is 34,000 pounds. We're always aiming for that number, and if the stuff is too bulky, the loaders can't get it all in the truck below. So they try to mix. You might have seen that pile of manure -- what looked like manure come in and you smelled it.

Yes, we smelled it!

Paul: That's really heavy, so they're going to try to mix that in with the bulky stuff to make the weight.

Recessionary Trash

Has the amount changed that you process through here?

Paul: The amount of material that we process has actually gone down with the reduced economy.

Really. You've noticed a difference between the economy and how much you're processing?

Paul: People aren't buying stuff so they're not throwing it away.

Has it picked up at all?

Paul: It seems to be picking up slightly.

You could run the stock market ...

Paul: Based on the trash!

Do you think ...?

Paul: No. [he laughs]

That's an interesting indicator, though. Are people consuming less, or is it because the packagers are getting smarter about being less wasteful?

Paul: That's part of it too, the packaging efficiency and the reduction of material used in packaging. But primarily it happened when the economy downturned. I looked at it and said, "Wait a minute. Is it because of reduced packaging?" But then I thought well, if [companies] are hurting for business, the last thing they're going to do is say, "Okay. Now we need to throw money at reducing packaging."

"I bring in approximately 300 vehicles a day from the curbside [trash collection] program, and reduce that down to a hundred vehicles, so that is a big [cost] savings ... The main thing about this place is the huge cost savings to the City."

— Paul LeBel



Paul LeBel (left) and John Hawkins.

Is anyone from the packaging industry curious as to what ends up here?

Paul: We've never had any kind of an interest shown here by anybody at that level.

It would be kind of interesting, for them to come in and see what ends up here.

Paul: Yes. We've done some profiles on what's out there [on the floor]. We actually have done some sorts. They'll go and pick up a route and sort it out to determine what's in it and what's recyclable in it. They've done residential and they've done commercial.

I guess when the economy comes back the amounts of trash will probably start building back up again. But this is going to be steady as she goes for awhile. It's a pretty basic function that happens here. It's not a high-tech facility.

Paul: It's high tech in terms of the permitting

and loading the trucks correctly and tracking the tonnage and the billing and all that. But the basic function itself is -- load the truck, dump the truck, load the truck.

You have the in-the-ground dumping. Using the front loader to load directly into a dump truck would take forever. Is there another way of doing this that's even more efficient, or is just shoving it into a hole in the ground the most efficient?

Paul: Shoving it in a hole is the most efficient, because you're not picking it up.

Right, right. Gravity.

Keeping Tidy

How many loaders do you have?

Paul: We try to have four out there during peak hours.

Do you ever have to sanitize?

Paul: Yes. We close down and wash out.

Every now and then?

Paul: Actually, we can't keep the trash for more than 24 hours, so every Friday night this building's emptied. We do the normal housecleaning during the week and pick up all the paper around the facility. But then the cleaning-type stuff is done on the weekends and after hours. The heavy cleaning.

Do you scrub the floor?

Paul: We do.

I noticed where the semi-trucks go in [below], that when they leave you can see a bunch of trash in there. Does a bulldozer have to come down at night?

Paul: We clean that out every evening. We haul it up here and put it in the trucks.

Do you have special personnel to clean up or does everybody do it?

Paul: The same people.

That's part of their job.

Paul: Yes.

I see.

Paul: We're open until six. We take our last truck in the gate at five, and at 5:15 we stop loading trucks in here and go in to the cleanup mode to be ready to close down.

Rewarding

Do you like what you do?

Paul: Yes, I do. I do.

What do you like about it?

Paul: This job is very production oriented, meaning, it has to get done. There's no reason why the trash is not going to come into this building, and there's no reason why it's not going to get to the landfill. I work well under that pressure. I like the production-type responsibilities.

Seeing things get started, then finish.

Paul: Yes.

It's action, and you're accomplishing something. You can see it.

Paul: You can see it every day, and if you don't see it, you'd better make it happen so you can see it.

What happens if the trash starts backing up?

Paul: There is no backup. On a Friday night, if we have trash in here, we will be in here Saturday loading it up.

Really.

Paul: Oh, yes. That's happened once in three years.

Is this sort of the cream of the crop for sanitation heavy equipment operators?

Paul: Yes. This is not a sit-still job!

Thanks for your time, Paul.

Paul: You're welcome. ■



A curbside truck leaves the transfer station.



Man vs. Trash

The Team

Meet the men and women at City's Central L.A. Recycling and Transfer Station who make it all happen.



Tom Billegas, Equipment Operator, 28 years.



Front row, from left: Antonia Gomez, Accounting Clerk I, 27 years; Rosario Felix, Clerk Typist, 6 years; and Isaura Navarro, Clerk Typist I, 6 years. Back: Lashavon Frederick, Clerk Typist, 1 year.



Prospero Hernandez, Maintenance Laborer, 6 years.



Edgardo Berez, Maintenance Laborer/Dispatcher, 6 years.



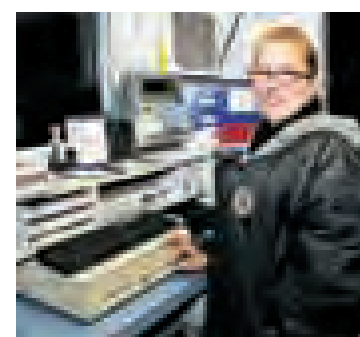
Andre Patton, Equipment Operator, 27 years.



Mario Duran, Equipment Operator, 16 years.



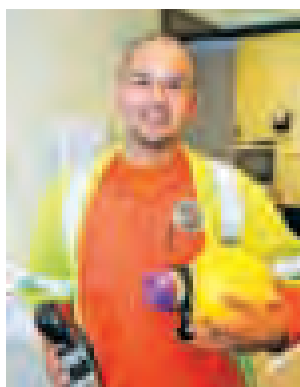
Sean Turner, Equipment Operator, 10 years.



Celia Medina, Maintenance Laborer, 6 years.



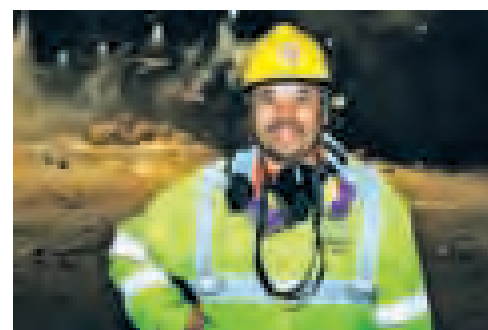
Billy Henderson, Management Analyst, 15 years.



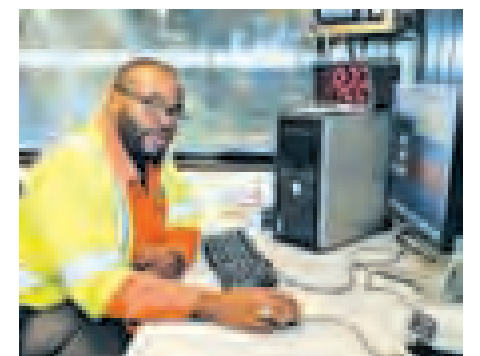
Jose Gonzalez, Maintenance Laborer, 4 years.



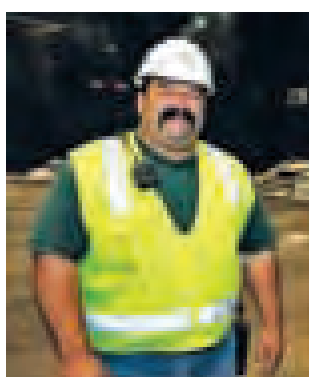
Gregory Carter, Equipment Supervisor, 24 years.



Luis Castillo, Maintenance Laborer, 6 years.



Jonathan Polk Jr., Maintenance Laborer/Dispatcher, 2 years.



Jose Gallardo, Equipment Supervisor.



Cecilia Torres, Maintenance Laborer, 6 years.



Sal Duarte, Equipment Operator, 23 years.



Mark Johnson, Equipment Operator, 26 years, refueling his Caterpillar front loader.



Juan Rivas, Maintenance Laborer, 6 years.