



KEEPING IT STRAIGHT: Crews picking up recyclables from Clifton, N.J., residents dump the source-separated recyclables into collection trucks.

Hard times

Award-winning recycling program faces challenges

By Joe Truini

CLIFTON, N.J. — Sometimes being good just isn't good enough.

In 1996, the city of Clifton recycled 56 percent of its municipal and commercial

solid waste, including 68 percent of its commercial waste. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

recognized the city in June as

having one of the top 18 programs

in the country based on its 1996 performance.

Clifton's city-run curbside recycling program serves 28,000 households and 1,300 small businesses.

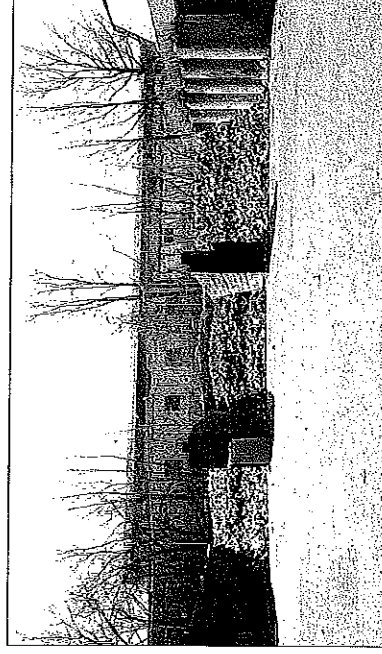
The city of 75,000 is blessed with ample recycling outlets, including a number of glass processors, said Alfred J. DuBois Jr., Clifton's recycling coordinator. Clifton brings in about \$200,000 annually from the sale of recyclables.

But after 1996, recycling got

tougher in New Jersey, DuBois said. Consolidation, flow control issues and a reduction of state grants threaten Clifton's program.

The city still recycles between 55 and 60 percent, but coming up with accurate commercial recycling figures is nearly impossible.

"Getting the documentation is extremely difficult," DuBois said. "The actual data is a living



PILED HIGH: Piles of separated recyclables are stored at a Clifton, N.J., Department of Public Works recycling yard.

nightmare for everyone."

The city mandates that businesses recycle. Four years ago, small haulers reported recycling tonnages to the city, he said.

Now, Waste Management Inc. is the area's dominant commercial hauler. Getting accurate information from WMI isn't as easy as it was getting it from the mom-and-pop haulers, DuBois said.

[Waste Management has] some major problems in reporting commercial recycling.

Alfred J. DuBois Jr.
Recycling Coordinator
Clifton, N.J.

"Even though they may have recycling programs in place, they're not reporting each company as they should be," he said. "They have some major problems in reporting commercial recycling."

The state stopped passing out recycling tonnage grants in 1997.

The program encouraged recycling by paying businesses \$1.50 per ton.

Now that the material is in the hands of a large hauler, the city has to fight for commercial tonnage.

"My biggest fight has not been trying to convince the people, [and] not against City Council; it's been the battle against the solid waste industry," DuBois said. "They want the waste." ■

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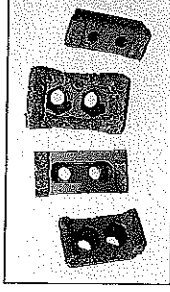
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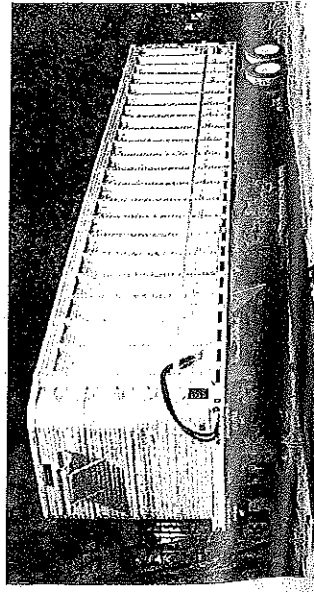


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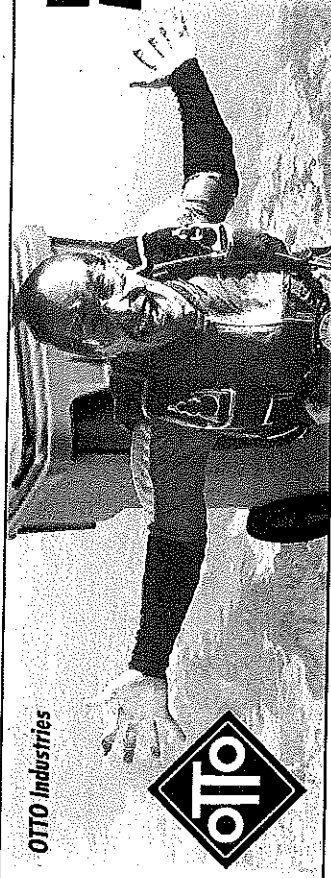
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