



## Company of the Month: Concrete Washout Systems: The environmentally conscious choice

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Concrete Washout System on-site for the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge (Tappan Zee Bridge) that created a safer commuter route between Westchester and Rockland Counties and crosses the Hudson River at one of its widest points. During peak construction periods, over 35 patented Concrete Washout System's containers were utilized to prevent caustic concrete washout from entering the Hudson River.

New York, NY Born out of the idea to launch of an environmentally friendly construction business, Concrete Washout Systems (CWS) is a portable self-contained and watertight roll-off bin that controls, captures and contains concrete washout and runoff. CWS makes it easy to wash out concrete trucks, pumps and equipment on-site, facilitating easy off-site recycling of the same concrete materials and wastewater.

Expansion of the Jacob K. Javits Center. One of the busiest convention centers in the country, this project added 1.2 million s/f of total event-related space on Manhattan's West Side, was completed on budget according to officials who praised the project executives for achieving this despite COVID-19 related challenges. New York Concrete Washout Systems provided service throughout the construction.

Capturing and recycling washout just isn't a "green" thing to do, it's a legal requirement, and builders ignore that at their own peril. The fines are pretty steep, cautions Roger Haftek, CEO of Concrete Washout Systems. In New York City, not properly handling concrete washout can result in a fine of \$6,000 a day. The city's Local Law 70 requires a builder or developer or anyone pouring concrete to utilize a manufactured container, specifically for the purpose of collecting concrete washout.

Dumping concrete washout, or handling it inefficiently can be costly in terms of fines—as much as \$15,000 a day, but it's also damaging to the environment, says Haftek. The material inherently has a high pH, a measure of how acidic or alkaline a substance is, a value of 12, and contains a range of corrosive chemicals. It's like pouring ammonia, oven cleaner or a liquid drain clearing product directly into the ground.

The pH scale goes from 0 to 14, where 7 is neutral. A change in one pH unit means a tenfold change in concentration, similar to the Richter scale in measuring earthquakes, CWS explains on its website. High pH levels are damaging to fish and vegetation, with effects including inhibited growth, damage to soil and plants and substantial alteration of the soil and plant chemical composition even after the pollution source is gone.

CWS takes the material to its treatment plant, reducing it to a pH value of seven. The heavy metals and solids are removed, and it becomes clean, reusable water that is delivered to the Passaic Valley Sewage Commission.

Despite the sanctions that can be applied for not handling concrete washout responsibly, and the environmental damage that can be done from letting it spill, some builders still try to cut corners, hoping they can get away with it. Many still do, according to Haftek.

"One of the benefits of working with us is, obviously, that people would comply with the law. The second benefit is that a lot of people use homemade contraptions, or maybe just dump the stuff on the ground, and they hope they don't get caught. We recycle everything we take ... no waste at all going to a landfill."

Trained drivers deliver the washout containers to a building site. When the containers are full, the drivers remove and replace them as required. Unfortunately, says Haftek, his biggest competition still comes from people just dumping this caustic material on the ground. Much of it comes down to a lack of enforcement.

### Moving Forward in A Positive Direction

The impact of COVID-19 on lives, communities, and the global economy is unparalleled in modern times. When we think back on 2020, the pandemic will resonate as a defining and historic moment, one that shaped future attitudes and behaviors, including workplace safety measures.

Concrete Washout System on-site for the 2,600 yard concrete pour at Disney's new Hudson Square 1.2 million s/f headquarters.

"Safety starts with our supervisors, employees learn by example. If they don't see them practicing good safety habits, they won't think safety is important," said Patricia Haftek. "There's a saying that's even more relevant in these times: 'Safety doesn't happen by accident.' Safety means keeping yourself and others free from harm or danger by being careful with what you are doing."

That means equipping employees with face shields, masks, gloves, sanitizing wipes, paper towels, and mandating their use. Crews also take extra precaution in cleaning their equipment before a shift and after each use, and also do a jobsite audit to determine where employees are touching shared surfaces and making sure those surfaces are disinfected regularly throughout the day.

"We recognize the responsibility we have to our employees, business partners, and clients. Drivers are advised to avoid any part of a job site where proper safety and PPE protocols are not being followed. They know the company will fully support them if a customer cannot be serviced due to unsafe job-site conditions," said Patricia Haftek.

It's not just jobsites that the pandemic has impacted, but office interactions as well. To limit exposure, meetings are usually done by phone, although the CWS office does remain open with limited staff.

It's also about getting buy-in from employees, and leadership from supervisors, that these measures will keep them and their families safe while they go about doing a job that has been deemed essential. As the economy continues to reopen, CWS is showing how business, while not as usual, can still be conducted if the proper safety protocols are followed.

"It's about due diligence at the job site. Proper sanitation and PPE protocols are easy to implement when employees handle their job in a professional manner," said Haftek.

CWS participates in a number of environmental events, sponsoring some, helping to educate the public about the need to be environmentally aware. That knowledge can lead to people who witness concrete washout being dumped, calling their municipalities and building inspectors.

Rehabilitation of the Ellis Island Seawall: One of the most popular national parks in the United States, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island together attract more than 4 million visitors each year and serve as dual symbols of hope and freedom to visitors from around the world. Using New York Concrete Washout System's patented containers

prevented caustic slurry from entering New York Harbor.

### Supporting Grassroot and Community Efforts

“We believe it’s important and are proud to support advocacy groups, such as The Hackensack Riverkeeper and participate in their annual EarthFest Overpeck, a celebration of clean water and a healthy environment, through a partnership between Hackensack Riverkeeper and Bergen County Parks. Related to our own mission, these grassroots organizations play a major role in making citizen’s more aware of the importance of clean water and how they can directly help in these efforts.” said Bill McGuire, marketing director.

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