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SERVING THE WASTE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES INDUSTRY | MAY/JUNE 2017 | WasteTodayMagazine.com

A man with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue polo shirt, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is standing in front of a large pile of waste, including paper, plastic, and other debris. The background is a dense field of this waste.

COLLECT & DIVERT

Ware Disposal serves its California customer base with responsive service and a full menu of landfill diversion options.

Jay Ware,
general manager,
Ware Disposal

Collect & divert

Ware Disposal serves its California customer base with responsive service and a full menu of landfill diversion options.

By Brian Taylor



Jay Ware is general manager of Ware Disposal and son of CEO Judith Ware.

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California as a place to conduct business is known for its regulatory scrutiny, but as a place to live it continues to attract people from within the U.S. and around the world, adding to its population of nearly 40 million people.

From its location in Orange County—in the heart of suburban Los Angeles—Ware Disposal has endured and thrived in the solid waste sector by meeting and exceeding California's ever-changing regulatory requirements while providing a range of services to a diverse customer base.

The family business is operated by founder and CEO Judith Ware, her son, General Manager Jay Ware, and a team of managers and employees who they cite as critical components to the company's ongoing success.

Adopting a philosophy that incorporates recycling, landfill diversion, reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and employing people from within the communities it serves, Ware Disposal has enjoyed steady growth as a provider of waste and recycling services in the competitive Southern California market.

RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY

Ware Disposal was founded in 1968 by Judith Helaine Ware and her husband, Ben Ware. In 1990, Judith assumed principal control and continues to serve as the president and CEO of the family business, along with her son, Jay.

Jay Ware says the company from the start has provided “high-quality refuse and recycling services to businesses and residents throughout Southern California.” He says when a wave of industry consolidation hit in the 1990s, “We began to really focus on our core strength, which is recycling.”

The company and its customers alike “found our commitment to recycling increasing,” says Ware. “We are now a true zero waste company. We handle all facets of solid waste and recycling, from preycling to the marketing of discarded materials, including food waste, organics, dry recyclables and construction and demolition (C&D) materials.”

He defines preycling as “working with customers on trying to find ways to reduce their solid waste.” It is a process that can include performing a waste audit, and it also ties in to ongoing education and outreach programs offered by Ware Disposal.

AT A GLANCE: WARE DISPOSAL

Officers: founder, President and CEO Judith Helaine Ware, General Manager Jay Ware, Chief Financial Officer Michael Shaffer, Business Development Administrator Xiu Xi Ye, Senior Operations Managers Manuel Gonzalez and Frank Torres, Recycling Coordinator Nicole Seyle and Legislative Director Jason Bryce Rush

Locations: headquarters and Madison Resource Recovery Facility in Santa Ana, California

No. of Employees: About 140

Equipment: more than 100 collection trucks, nearly all fueled by compressed natural gas (CNG); dry and inert recyclables sorting systems and a ReGreen Machine to process organics, including green waste and food scraps, at the Madison Resource Recovery Facility

Volume: 420,000 tons collected annually; 200,000 tons processed at Madison Resource Recovery Facility

Geographic Area Served: Southern California

Types of Waste Handled: municipal solid waste and recyclables; commercial dry waste and recyclables; organics; construction and demolition (C&D) debris

Ware says the approach has led to company growth that is “nothing short of phenomenal,” adding that Ware Disposal has multiplied its revenue by a factor of five in the past 15 years.

“I attribute a lot of our recent growth and success to our emphasis on the triple bottom line: people, planet and profits,” he says.

MINIMAL IMPACTS

California has mandatory recycling targets that have a direct impact on how Ware Disposal interacts with its customers. The state also has aggressive GHG emissions reduction goals that have affected how the company manages its fleet of more than 100 collection trucks. Ware says these two aspects of the business tie together in terms of how the company addresses the “planet” aspects of its triple bottom line.

“One of our focuses is on commercial waste, especially inert materials, plus fiber, plastics and organics,” Ware says. “These also make up the bulk of municipal solid waste (MSW) today and are the principal contributors in our sector to human-related greenhouse gases.”

The materials Ware Disposal pursues on its routes and brings to its Madison Resource Recovery Facility in Santa Ana, California, “represent two-thirds of all urban waste, so it makes sense to target these materials and sectors in our business model,” he says.

The Madison facility welcomes a diverse range of materials onto its tipping floor, but Ware says the plant is a long way from a “dirty MRF (material recovery facility).” Ware Disposal uses a combination of collection and routing techniques to bring together commingled loads from commercial, residential and C&D customers that, while not necessarily source separated, are heavy in inert and dry recyclables.

Ware says that while source separation might yield a 40 percent recycling rate, and older-style dirty MRFs may yield just a 30 percent recycling rate, “We have invested in high-technology machinery, combined with the human touch, to recycle upwards of 75 percent of the materials delivered to our facility.”

The plant features a new sorting system, and Ware Disposal also is in the process of installing an organics processing system made by Fulton, Maryland-based ReGreen Organics Inc. Ware calls it a “state-of-the-art ReGreen Machine, capable of processing about 90 tons per day. It converts food waste and organics to a variety of end products, including fuel pellets, compost bulking agents and animal feed supplements.”

On the fleet management side, Ware says nearly 80 of the company’s approximately 100 trucks are powered by compressed natural gas (CNG).

How the company nurtures its relationship with its employees is part of the “people” portion of its triple bottom line, and Ware Disposal zero waste consultant Professor J. Michael Huls says this includes “a very good working relationship with the union. That’s unusual for a mid-sized company,” he comments. “Many of our competitors are not unionized. Unionizing has helped to stabilize pricing and has been good for the customers since they are served by veteran drivers who know their jobs.”

How the company relates with its customers, including diverse communities, and how it hires also tie into its “people” priorities. (See the sidebar “Powered by people.”)

While the company doesn’t disclose financial results, a look at some of its recent and planned expansion projects serves to demonstrate that the “profits” aspect of the triple bottom line is not being neglected.



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WIDER HORIZONS

In September 2016, the company was informed that it had been awarded one of seven franchises in the city of Los Angeles to collect waste and recyclables from commercial businesses.

Ware Disposal's franchise territory in the Southeast Zone includes more than 1,800 properties. The contract includes "Zero Waste L.A." targets that are a good fit for the company's corporate priorities. The overall Zero Waste L.A. plan includes a target of a reduction of materials disposed in landfills of 1 million tons per year by 2025.

It is not the first franchise agreement for Ware Disposal, as the company has official relationships for residential or commercial hauling and processing with several California cities, including Irvine, Mission Viejo, Monterey Park and Santa Ana, as well as Los Angeles County.

POWERED BY PEOPLE

Ware Disposal remains a family business, but, as the Santa Ana, California-based company grows, it relies on an increasingly larger group of employees to manage and staff its operations.

When it comes to hiring, General Manager Jay Ware says, "The work force is very diversified and reflective of the communities served." He says the company strives to include minorities in its hiring, in part so the workforce reflects the communities in which they work.

Another way Ware Disposal distinguishes itself in hiring is by using "second chance" programs for formerly incarcerated people. It is working with nonprofit Homeboy Industries, which provides training and support to previously incarcerated men and women.

Regarding the people Ware Disposal hires through its connection with the group, Ware says, "They may have a mark against them, and it can be so difficult for someone formerly incarcerated to get a job."

Ware says the company is most comfortable when competing for business. "It's not franchising that typically generates innovation, it's competition and market development. But we will always try and find ways to bring innovation to the franchise system," he comments.

A combination of California legislative targets and corporate and municipal sustainability goals means Ware Disposal will continue to invest in ways to divert materials from the landfill—a goal that Ware says is nearly universal among the company's customers.

"We recently invested about \$2.5 million to upgrade the sorting line at the Madison Resource Recovery Facility, and we have additional upgrades scheduled to use an air density system to further separate inert materials from organics," Ware says.

The ReGreen Machine is another way of upping Ware Disposal's diversion rate. "It has multiple stages, including a size reducer, squeezing out the liquids and dehydrating material to create pellets that are then dried and cooled," he says.

"The waste industry has to evolve into a resource industry," Ware adds. "The current waste haulers need to rethink and then assist customers to put in place sustainable practices—to be part of a circular economic loop, emphasizing recycling."

In terms of its future, Ware says the company must retain its long-held customer service value of "taking the Minuteman approach: We're available anytime, anyplace, and we respond immediately." He adds, "We're always looking for opportunities to keep costs low and service high, with a constant environmental focus."

Ware cites that focus on the environment as the other key component to the company's future. "We're continually in a growth phase, including installing and upgrading the two new sort lines at the MRF," he says. "We plan on continuing to vertically integrate within the biomass and food waste sectors. Our future is represented in our watch words—continuous improvement—and that will continually drive us to excellence."

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