

Ultimate Software What Are Available, What They Will Do

"You wouldn't believe what this system can do - everything but comb your hair."

By David Engle

Santa Barbara City and County (Population: 92,325 and 399,347, Respectively)

Santa Barbara - based Marborg Industries, a small waste franchise holder with 50 employees, does trash pickup for this environmentally sensitive coastal community and runs a construction-and-demolition recycling facility. Late last year, Marborg upgraded its weigh scale program, called Soft-Pak, to a fully integrated accounting and report-generating version called Scale Pak. Implementation brought only "the standard snafus" inherent in any software change, reports Derek Carlson, Marborg's business manager, and was otherwise uneventful.

Almost immediately Carlson found that the new billing and reporting module meshed "in a very sophisticated manner," giving him detailed account tracking down to general ledger codes. "We now know where every load is coming from by a precise address," he says. Data about the content or source are permanently associated with a unique dump ticket. This provides him with a level of detail that would have been "logistically impossible if it wasn't automated," he notes, especially if it were reliant on the rather episodic style of manual inputting by busy scale operators. Scale Pak's accounting module also allows voiding of dump tickets, which reverses the charges on the ledger and automatically updates the landfill reports in one step.

As with the other integrated programs, account and job-order data are mostly pre-entered, including routing, service level, load volume in gallons, jurisdictions, and truck data. Content can also be preapportioned, in gallons, to reflect multiple franchise jurisdictions being carried in one haul.

Each incoming job request is initially assigned a work-order number issued to the driver. When he and his load arrive at the scale house, he gives it to the operator for keying in and confirms the content; built-in safeguards prevent errors, but the system also allows revisions and new fields.

Customers receive fully itemized billing statements and can get backup documentation. Data refinements can also break out solid waste and recyclables, per jurisdictions. Customers have been expecting this level of accuracy from Marborg, says Carlson, and the new software makes it easy.

His advice to other solid waste managers: "You can make the process easier by thinking through all the info you need to gather, so you won't have to backtrack and add something you forgot."