Commercial and housing building projects are big business in South Australia. In many urban areas, suburbs and towns, we can see new houses, housing developments, office blocks, factories being built. Renovation and urban renewal projects are just as common. And these projects all generate waste.

About 1000 houses are demolished in Adelaide each year, and the level of urban regeneration means that this is likely to increase. Each averaged sized house demolished makes about 150 to 250 tonnes of waste. About 4 tonnes of waste is generated during construction of an average sized house.

The four major recyclers of building materials in Adelaide process around 975,000 tonnes of material, mainly concrete and asphalt, each year. They and other firms capture a significant proportion of the ‘waste’ material.

But the construction and demolition industry still contributes about 40% of all landfill waste. Valuable and recyclable items such as timber, bricks, and fittings and fixings, are being thrown on the dump.

From a business, and increased profits, point of view, minimising this waste makes sense.
Everyone involved in the industry can make a difference in managing building and construction waste:

- clients
- householders
- business
- government
- architects or designers
- builders
- project managers
- contractors.

What can we do?
We can all minimise construction waste by following the 3Rs - reduce, reuse, recycle.

Reduce
Builders can reduce waste by:

- using standard size and prefabricated building materials for timber, plasterboard and bricks to reduce waste from offcuts and costs for handling and disposal
- preparing a waste minimisation plan as part of their contract (and reporting back)
- using secondhand or recycled materials
- salvaging as much material as possible from the demolished structure for the new one.

Reuse
Unwanted building materials, fixtures and fittings, and heritage items such as old fireplaces and windows can be sold at specialist or general secondhand or salvage outlets.

Recycle
Recycling waste can generate substantial savings in building and construction.

In South Australia:

- residents can put out material for pick up in kerbside hard waste collection schemes run by local councils (check with your council whether they provide this service and about the type and amount of material that can be collected)
- building contractors can separate waste streams at the construction site and take construction and demolition waste to recycling firms in preference to landfill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIAL</th>
<th>REUSE AND RECYCLING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masonry, concrete, construction aggregate</td>
<td>Pavements, roads, carparks, driveways, shoulder aggregate, pipe bedding, erosion control, landscaping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricks, tiles</td>
<td>Salvaged and resold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>Floorboards, reconstituted panelboards, doors, furniture, fencing, mulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>Crushed for compaction fill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulation material</td>
<td>Housing insulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metals</td>
<td>Remelted into secondary materials for structural steel, roofing, piping etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees, organic material</td>
<td>Compost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastics</td>
<td>Secondary materials for playgrounds, park benches etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper, cardboard</td>
<td>Mulch, compost, animal bedding, newsprint, egg cartons, packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fittings (baths, toilets, sinks)</td>
<td>Salvaged and resold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Further information
[www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au](http://www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au) has links to information for developers, architects, designers, builders and local government on waste minimisation strategies, contracts and recycling guides for the industry. It also has useful information on waste minimisation plans.

Zero Waste SA
The goal of Zero Waste SA is to eliminate waste or its disposal in landfill by encouraging South Australians to:

- reduce their consumption of resources
- reuse and recycle materials.


Sources