



Contract Grinding: An Alternative to Large Equipment Purchasing

FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

On Jan. 1, 1993, North Carolina's ban on the disposal of yard trash in municipal solid waste landfills went into effect. As a result, many local governments have chosen to start their own mulch and/or compost operations. Private businesses that manage yard waste and wood waste have also become involved in mulching/composting to avoid possible tipping fees at solid waste management sites.

Composting and mulching operations often require that organic materials be ground to size. An alternative to purchasing grinding equipment is to contract for grinding services, particularly if the cost of independently purchasing, maintaining and operating grinding equipment is prohibitive.

This fact sheet outlines the benefits of contract grinding services and addresses pre-contract considerations. Table 1 lists some North Carolina local governments that currently contract for grinding services. A listing of contract wood grinding companies currently serving North Carolina can be found from a search of "Mobile Recyclers – Wood Waste" in the [Recycling Markets Directory](#).

BENEFITS OF CONTRACT GRINDING SERVICES

- Contract grinding may be the most cost-effective approach. The purchase of a grinder may involve a large initial capital outlay and a long payback period. Contracting expenses such as administrative fees may be minor in comparison to the savings from mulch/compost sales and avoided tipping fees.
- Contract grinding can eliminate equipment maintenance costs, which vary with the type of machine, operator experience and debris type and cleanliness.
- Contract grinding can eliminate employee-training costs. Experienced operators may be difficult to find, and training of operators can take from three months to a year.
- Contract grinding may be the best option for a large volume of debris caused by seasonal storms or natural disasters.

PRE-CONTRACT QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Ask for and confirm references. Get information from previous clients about the vendor's grinding rates per hour, set-up fees, equipment reliability, availability of mechanics/welders, accuracy of bid estimates and on-time service. Request copies of performance records.
- Contract grinders charge for services by the ton, by the yard, or by the hour. Communities may receive three proposals, all bid differently, which make comparison difficult. To weigh the options, a good rule of thumb is that one ton equals about four yards. It may be a good idea to ask for both kinds of pricing from bidders. Consider requesting bids based on the volume or weight of the debris to be ground or the total job, rather than by the hour. The amount of yards or tons a grinder can process in an hour depends on factors such as the size of the machine and the size of the output screen. It is advisable to ask hourly bidders to also give a per yard or per ton bid, or to provide some documentation of their equipment's throughput. In general, all grinders tend to offer the best prices for large fixed piles of clean material and higher prices for scattered piles of uneven quality material.

- Include provisions in the contract for equipment maintenance and delays.
- Before a bid is accepted, consider the size and the capabilities of the grinder to be used as well as its age. Grinding machines vary considerably in performance.
- Consider the screen size of the equipment. If a grinder is contracted by the hour, take into account that smaller screens (less than three inches) produce mulch at slower rates, while larger screens (more than four inches) produce mulch at faster rates. If the marketing of mulch material is a consideration, note that different mulch sizes may have different markets. Finer mulches may be marketed as landscape material while coarser material can be marketed as boiler fuel.
- Discuss your marketing interest with your vendor. For example, if material will be marketed as boiler fuel, your vendor may take efforts to minimize dirt and other contaminants.
- Consider the distance between the project and the vendor’s business office. Vendors may charge more for hauling equipment longer distances.
- Include the size/term of the project in the request for bids. Some vendors may charge less for longer-term grinding or larger volume projects.
- If you require service within a short time frame, ask about the vendor’s availability and pending contracts that may affect the timing of service to you.
- Consider including a provision or letting a separate contract for emergency storm debris management. Pre-approved contracts can prove extremely valuable by helping to control cost, plan budgets and implement clean up services in a timely manner. Requests for bids for these services can be let long before a storm hits, allowing plenty of time to adequately review contractor references, evaluate cost structure and lock in a price for service. *As with all storm debris related matters, it is a good idea to check with FEMA prior to establishing a storm debris management contract.*

Mobile Wood Waste Grinding Companies in North Carolina - For assistance in wood waste grinding alternatives, contact the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance.

Table 1. North Carolina Local Governments Using Contract Wood Grinding Services

Note: The following list is not intended to be comprehensive. It was updated in September 2009. Some of the listed jurisdictions may cease using contract grinders and others not listed may begin using contract grinders. Contact DPPEA for updated information.

Brunswick County Stephanie Lewis (910) 253-2521	Franklin County John Faulkner (919) 496-5002	New Hanover County Lynn Bestul (910) 798-4410	Randolph County Ann Lawson (336) 318-6607
City of Durham Josephine Valencia (919) 560-4186	Macon County Joel Olstroff (828) 349-2252	Pasquotank County Mike Etheridge (252) 335-4105	City of Reidsville Pat Knowles (336) 349-1074
City of Eden Rodney Carter (336) 627-4688	McDowell County Mike Gladden (828) 659-2521	Pitt County John Demary (252) 902-3355	Rockingham County Jack Brinkley (336) 342-8276



The N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA) provides free, non-regulatory technical assistance and education on methods to eliminate, reduce, or recycle wastes before they become pollutants or require disposal. Telephone DPPEA at (919) 715-6500 or (800) 763-0136 for assistance with issues in this fact sheet or any of your waste reduction concerns. Mention of products or services does not imply endorsement or recommendation by the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources or DPPEA.