

<http://news.rgj.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080131/LIV/801310320&source=nletter-news>



Solar can gobbles large loads of trash

MAGGIE O (online@rgj.com)

NEILL

MONEILL@RGJ.COM

January 31, 2008

A solar-powered trash can called the BigBelly holds five times the trash as a typical can and is making its way into Northern Nevada, thanks to a dealer who believes in the product.

The can is touted as an environmentally-green product because it needs to be emptied less frequently than a regular can. As a result, trash trucks releasing toxic emissions are on the road less, roads see less wear and tear, and traffic and money spent on fuel decreases. The BigBelly eliminates four out of five trash pick-ups, said Tom Venner, the dealer who is championing the spread of the BigBelly in Northern Nevada.

"This is sort of an environmental story," said Venner, vice president of Industrial Handling Equipment, Inc., in Sparks, the only dealer of BigBelly in the area. "It is also an introduction to a new way of doing things."

An additional benefit of the BigBelly is that businesses can redirect manpower spent on trash collection to other projects, he said.

"The BigBelly is a tremendous cost-savings," Venner said. "For people in large traffic areas that are spending an exorbitant amount of money in labor collecting their trash, this is what BigBelly is about. It's a big money-savings item."

The BigBelly uses a solar panel to power an internal compactor that crushes trash in the can. This is compacted into a bale. The trash cans can be used anywhere and do not need direct light for the compactor to operate. The can comes with three indicator lights on the front of the container -- green, yellow and red -- showing when the can has plenty of space, when it is reaching capacity and when it is full. When a municipality uses multiple cans, it can monitor these indicators remotely through a computer connection.

BigBelly, which comes in various sizes, also is an enclosed container. Trash cannot fly away, and small animals can't get inside. Venner recently put up a 300-pound BigBelly at the main entrance to Lawlor Events Center. He has been there once to see if it was full. It wasn't.

His employees are approaching businesses and municipalities in the area with the BigBelly. Venner said the business will take a BigBelly to any site to do a demonstration. Industrial Handling Equipment Inc. offers the BigBelly on a lease-to-own option with contracts starting at 12 months and extending to 60 months. A 48-month lease for one trash can, for example, costs \$125 a month, but the trash can is the lessee's to own at the end of the contract. Discounts are given for multiple trash cans.

"Keep in mind that these BigBellies are a fraction of the cost spent on manpower expense," Venner said. "The biggest cost in any business is people. This product has reduced the quantity of money you're spending on people, plus doing it in a very green fashion."

BigBelly has other benefits, too. When Venner worked in California, he leased the cans to a student group at Santa Clara University that used them to collect recycling.

"They were collecting plastic and soda cans, and they turned it into a profitable little deal for their group," he said. "They were taking the bales and turning them around and making money."

BigBelly, headquartered in Boston, has been in business since 2003, according to Bruce Todtfeld, vice president of marketing and product management.

"Principally, we've been selling to municipalities, and we've also sold to some private developers," Todtfeld said. "We're in cities and towns across the country. We have machines in New York, Chicago, and we're expanding on the West Coast. We're beginning to spread in the Seattle area, in Santa Cruz, and San Francisco has started a pilot program."

Elisa Canum, a BigBelly dealer in the Las Vegas area since late 2006, said response to the trash can is positive.

"The customers are very excited about the innovation," she said. "They like the fact that it reduces the number of times they have to pick up trash by 80 percent."



The BigBelly is now available in Northern Nevada. (SUBMITTED ART/RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL)