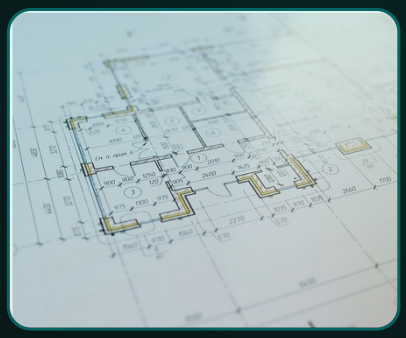
ABECA
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THE DUMPSTER YOU DIDN'T NEED

Why the Waste Leaves the Design Table Before It Ever Reaches Your Dumpster.

By Dr. John M. Thurber, RCDD, CSI

600M Tons
of C&D debris generated in the U.S. every year

40%
less jobsite waste with pre-kitted, right-sized material

75%
landfill diversion achievable with a documented plan

Every pallet of unopened boxes, every reel scrapped instead of returned, every cut of cable too short to reuse — all of it was decided months before a dumpster ever showed up. Waste on a low-voltage project isn't a jobsite problem. It's a design and procurement problem wearing a jobsite costume.

Construction and demolition activity generates roughly 600 million tons of debris in the U.S. every year — more than twice the volume of all municipal solid waste combined. A meaningful share of that is packaging and material that never had to hit the site the way it did: oversized cable reels, single-use cardboard, and shrink-wrapped pallets sized for a warehouse, not a floor-by-floor rollout.

Most owners and general contractors treat waste reduction as something to manage after the material shows up — dumpster sizing, recycling haulers, paperwork at closeout. By then the packaging has already been manufactured, the reel has already been wound, and the pallet has already been shrink-wrapped to a size nobody actually asked for. The decisions that reduce waste happen earlier: in the design, in the spec, and in the conversation with the distributor before the first purchase order is cut.

Waste Is Designed In Long Before It's Hauled Out

Early contractor and designer involvement isn't just a schedule advantage — it's a waste-reduction tool. Accurate quantity takeoffs, right-sized reel counts, and packaging built around the actual floor-by-floor rollout consistently cut both cost overruns and excess material. Projects that bring cabling into the conversation at the design phase, rather than after the budget is set, order closer to what they'll actually install — and closer to correct is the single biggest lever against waste of any kind.

The same logic applies to how material arrives on site. Pre-kitted, pre-cut, just-in-time-delivered material — assembled to the actual run lengths and staged for the day it's installed, not the day it's ordered — has been shown to cut jobsite waste by roughly 40% compared to bulk-ordered material trimmed to fit in the field. Less scrap, less packaging, and far less material sitting in a laydown area waiting to become a problem.

The greenest box on a jobsite is the one that was never shipped in the first place.

That decision gets made at the design table and the distributor's dock — not the dumpster.

What a Distributor Can Actually Do About It

Major distributors have built real programs around this, not just a recycling bin by the loading dock. WESCO's own sustainable procurement standards call for recycled-content cardboard and packaging fill, and its work with manufacturers has produced results like a bulk-packaging redesign for one partner that eliminated roughly 80% of that product line's packaging waste. The tools already exist: palletization built around a specific floor plan, consolidated shipments instead of a dozen partial ones, and reel or spool take-back through programs run by suppliers like Sonoco, Corning, and Carris Reels. Whether any of it gets used on a given project depends entirely on whether someone asked for it before the order was placed.

It Doesn't Change Who You Buy From

None of this requires routing material through ABECA. If your low-voltage contractor already has a distributor relationship, that relationship can still be built around a waste-conscious plan — provided ABECA is involved early enough to help shape it. Our role is to get the manufacturer, the distributor, and the installing contractor talking about packaging, reel sizing, and delivery schedule before the purchase order is written, not to insert ourselves into the supply chain.

What a Documented Waste Plan Actually Buys You

A construction waste management plan documented from the start — material streams identified, a diversion target set, and a hauler or recycler lined up before demolition or rough-in begins — is what most green building programs require to award credit for it. LEED recognizes projects that divert 50 to 75 percent of nonhazardous debris from the landfill, but the credit only follows the paperwork: a plan set up in advance, not a recycling dumpster added after the fact because someone asked at closeout.

That's the piece ABECA adds on a low-voltage scope: a waste and packaging plan that's part of the design deliverable, not an afterthought bolted on at substantial completion. We coordinate with the distributor and manufacturer on packaging and delivery format during design, and we verify during inspection that what showed up on site matches what was actually planned — the same discipline we apply to testing and warranty documentation, aimed at what leaves the building instead of what stays in it.

Sustainable Doesn't Mean Slower

None of this asks a project to move slower or spend more to be responsible. Right-sized material orders, consolidated shipments, and pre-kitted delivery tend to save time and labor on top of reducing what ends up in a dumpster. The building goes up the same way either way. The only difference is how much of what arrived on the truck actually needed to be there.

Dr. John M. Thurber is a Registered Communications Distribution Designer (RCDD) and a member of the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI), specializing in Division 27/28 telecommunications infrastructure design.