

Lockwood landfill uses methane to turn trash into electricity

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

It isn't quite turning garbage into gold. But it's close.

For the past couple of weeks, Waste Management's Lockwood landfill has literally been having a gas, generating electricity at its new renewable energy plant by using the methane it produces from decomposing garbage.

Since going online, the plant has been sending electricity to the grid as part of a power purchase agreement with NV Energy. It has produced up to 3.2 megawatts of electricity per day – enough to power 1,800 homes. The facility also can be expanded to add a third engine once capacity at Lockwood increases. The landfill itself has 100 years worth of waste capacity, said Justin Caporusso, communications manager for Waste Management's Northern Nevada and Sacramento operations

“We're basically capturing the methane gas and using it to run these engines and turbines that generate power,” Caporusso said. “It's part of our goal to not only reduce the amount of material going into our landfills but also find better uses for the material we have there now.”

The project is part of a big push by the company nationwide to leverage the materials it collects into a strong renewable portfolio. In addition to more than 130 gas-to-energy plants, such as the one at Lockwood, Waste Management also has a wide range of renewable programs under its belt, including projects that generate liquid methane gas from waste to power its trucks or even produce oil from plastic.

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