

Is weight discrepancy in trash delivery the cost of doing business?

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Trash trucks weighing different amounts at landfills 100 miles apart is not that unusual, said a city of Casper official.

A weight discrepancy of as much as 50 tons during a month's time could be explained as a difference in tare weight said Cindie Langston, solid waste manager in Casper.

Langston speculated some of the discrepancy was because of the difference in the fuel load of the trucks at the Rawlins landfill and when they get to the Casper landfill. Rawlins may also have different tare weights for the trucks hauling the garbage compared to what Casper has recorded, Langston said.

Sage Creek Excavation transports an average of four to five loads of household waste for the city of Rawlins to Casper each week. They use a 26-ton truck and a 28-ton truck to do the transporting, owner John Kurtz said.

Sage Creek's trucks are weighed before they enter and before they exit both the Rawlins and Casper landfills. This is to eliminate the weight of the truck and trailer from the tonnage of trash being delivered. The truck and trailer is the tare weight.

"The city of Rawlins weighs my truck on the scale at the landfill and I bill them based on what their scale reads," Kurtz said. "If there is a discrepancy between what my truck weighs at the Rawlins landfill compared to what it weighs at the Casper landfill, then that discrepancy is within the Rawlins landfill, or it's between the two cities. My company has nothing to do with it."

Rawlins Finance Director Dan Izzo presented the monthly costs to transport the household waste and the gate fees paid at the Casper landfill to the Rawlins City Council last week. The figures showed the city paid Sage Creek to haul 346 more tons of garbage than the Casper landfill was billing the city between February and November 2011.

The city started hauling trash to Casper in February. The weight discrepancy that first month was sixth tenths of a ton. The next month showed a discrepancy of 108 tons as the weight tickets at the Casper landfill added up more than the weight tickets at the Rawlins landfill.

March was one of three months when the pendulum swung in that direction. The others were September and November, and the differences were three tons and 58 tons, respectively.

The months of April and May showed a discrepancy of around 50 tons with the trucks weighing more at the Rawlins landfill than at the Casper landfill. June and October had the most discrepancy with a difference of 116 tons and 132 tons, respectively.

Izzo and City Public Works Director Blane Frandsen were not able to provide an answer for the weight discrepancies at the workshop last week, and the council asked them to bring the information to another workshop on Jan. 17. The City Council delayed a decision to bring a number of proposed fee increases to the public until they get answers to this and other questions.

In his presentation, Izzo estimated there would be a discrepancy of nearly 500 tons by the end of February if the trend continued.

City Manager Steve Golnar brought up a possible reason at the workshop as he said the scale at the Rawlins landfill was not long enough for the Sage Creek trucks. Therefore, the city may be underestimating the tare weight of the trucks in their calculations.

The city paid Sage Creek \$22 a ton to haul the garbage to Casper during the 10-month period between February and November 2011. The discrepancy of nearly 346 tons during that span meant the city paid about \$7,612 more to the company.

The two sides agreed to a new contract last month and Sage Creek is now getting \$24 a ton through 2012.

Casper charges Rawlins a gate fee of \$38 a ton. That is the rate Natrona County businesses pay, Langston said, plus a \$7 discount because the household waste is baled and bagged at the Rawlins facility. The Casper City Council voted recently not to raise their gate fees for the next two years, Langston added.

According to Izzo's figures, the city paid Sage Creek Excavation \$113,600 during the 10 months in question and \$183,200 to Casper.