Concrete Reclaimers: Turning Returned Concrete into Recovered Value

Concrete Equipment Innovation™

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Every ready-mix producer deals with returned concrete. Trucks come back from jobsites with unused material, mixer drums must be washed, and batch plants generate wash water and leftover concrete that must be managed. Without a concrete reclaimer, much of that material becomes waste. A reclaimer changes the equation by recovering valuable materials before they become hardened waste—turning returned concrete into reusable aggregate, sand, and water while reducing disposal costs and plant cleanup.

Do Ready-Mix Producers Need Reclaimers?

Returned concrete is inevitable. A customer may over-order, a pour may be canceled, weather may interrupt a project, or a truck may simply return with a few yards remaining. Every load contains materials the producer has already purchased and paid to transport.

Without reclamation, those materials may end up in washout pits, settling ponds, or landfills. That means paying for the materials once — and then paying ***again*** to dispose of them. A concrete reclaimer helps producers:

- Recover valuable coarse aggregate and, in some systems, sand
- Reduce concrete disposal and landfill costs
- Reuse reclaimed water
- Reduce washout labor and equipment requirements
- Keep the plant cleaner and more organized
- Reduce waste and support environmental compliance.

How Does a Concrete Reclaimer Work?

Returned concrete is loaded into the reclaimer and mixed with water. Mechanical separation equipment then washes cement paste away from the aggregate and separates the material by size.

Larger aggregate is recovered for potential reuse. Sand, cement fines, and wash water are directed into separate recovery or water-management systems.

The exact process varies by manufacturer. Some reclaimers rely primarily on screws or classifiers, while others use rotating screens or trommels to tumble and wash the material. The goal is the same: recover as much usable material as possible before it becomes waste.

Not All Reclaimers Are Alike

Several factors deserve careful consideration when comparing concrete reclaimers:

Aggregate cleanliness matters because cleaner recovered stone is more useful and may be incorporated into future production at higher percentages.

Sand recovery can significantly improve the economics of reclamation. A system that recovers only coarse aggregate leaves another valuable raw material behind.

Water management is equally important. An effective reclamation system can reduce fresh water consumption by allowing reclaimed water to be reused in concrete production.

Capacity matters for busy plants. A reclaimer must be able to process returned loads quickly enough that washout never becomes a production bottleneck.

Durability and wear resistance are critical because concrete is highly abrasive. Heavy-duty construction and replaceable wear components can have a major impact on long-term costs.

Finally, **maintenance and ease of operation** matter. A machine that is difficult to clean or repair can turn a valuable recovery system into another source of downtime.