

AGGREGATE— What's that?

Aggregate is stone, sand and gravel. Aggregate can be used in its natural state or it can be rock that is crushed into smaller pieces. And it's the one mineral commodity we use more of than any other.

Aggregate is used to build highways, bridges, homes, schools, sidewalks and parking lots. Your driveway may be made of crushed stone, gravel, asphalt or concrete.

Asphalt is made by mixing thick oil that holds together aggregate. Concrete is made by mixing water, cement and aggregate. Cement is a mixture of limestone and gypsum. Cement works as the glue in concrete.

Your house may be constructed of brick or stone. Aggregate is used in wallboard and roofing shingles too. On average, it takes 200 tons of crushed stone, sand or gravel to build a new home. (2,000 pounds make up 1 ton.)

We call the aggregate used for building "construction aggregate." Some aggregate is also used in agriculture. Finely ground lime is used to make soil better for plants. In manufacturing, silica and sand are used to make glass.

Think about how aggregate is used in your home and neighborhood. You can see how important it is to produce and use aggregate.

The United States alone uses more than 2 billion tons of aggregate each year. That means that every American uses 8 tons of crushed stone, sand or gravel on average each year.

Can you list some ways aggregate is used in your neighborhood or community?

