



Focus On **Paper Consumption**

A single sheet of paper may contain fibers from hundreds of trees from around the world. Fibers can travel thousands of miles from a forest to an office. In the United States, that sheet has less than a 5 percent chance of containing recycled fibers and only a 50 percent chance of avoiding a landfill or incinerator. Every year, any average U.S. office employee generates approximately 9,999 more sheets, totaling about 27 pounds per person.

Paper Consumption

For centuries, paper was a rare and precious commodity. Today, paper is a fundamental part of life and its existence is taken for granted. Each year, the world produces more than 300 million tons of paper. The United States annually consumes 4 million tons of copy paper, 2 billion books, 350 million magazines and 25 billion newspapers. U.S. households receive nearly 90 billion pieces of commercial "junk mail" in a year. Proof of our paper addiction is in our garbage cans—paper comprises 40 percent of U.S. municipal solid waste.

Impact on Forests & Environment

Natural forests are being destroyed at an unsustainable pace with most surviving forests degraded by roads, agriculture, pollution and invasive species. More than 30 million forested acres—an area about the size of Pennsylvania—are lost annually. Society's insatiable demand for products drives the destruction. More than 40 percent of logged trees is used for paper. For every ton of paper produced, two to four tons of trees are brought to the mill, with old-growth trees supplying nine percent of that fiber.

Paper manufacturing requires huge inputs of chemicals, energy and water. Plantations use heavy doses of insecticides, fungicides and herbicides, do not provide the same ecosystem functions as natural forests and often displace indigenous peoples and replace natural ecosystems, including forests. Reducing paper use and

substituting alternative papers can greatly minimize these environmental impacts.

Paper Minimization in the Office

Daily office practices, as well as conferences and meetings, leave room for a minimum of 20 percent reduction in paper use. These techniques result in cost savings by reducing paper purchases, decreasing storage space for filing cabinets, lowering postage costs, reducing long-distance phone charges for faxes and lowering energy costs of operating office machines.

Techniques:

- Distribute memos via email.
- Share internal documents through the intranet.
- Bookmark webpages instead of printing them out.
- Use electronic business forms.
- Store office records on CD-ROMs.
- Request electronic or CD-ROM versions and share subscriptions.
- Share one "master copy" of hard documents and edit draft documents on a single circulating draft.
- Adjust page settings (e.g., margins, line spacing and font size) on drafts.
- Print letterhead directly from staff computers.
- Consolidate similar forms.
- Eliminate commercial junk mail.
- Replace fax cover sheets with stick-on labels.
- Send and receive faxes via personal computers to avoid printing.
- Print fax confirmation sheets only when there is a failed transmission.
- Set copiers and printers to duplex as a default.
- Print two or more pages per side of a sheet (via printer options or special software).
- Use scrap paper for drafts or note paper.
- Eliminate cover or divider pages.

Each year, the world produces more than 300 million tons of paper.

Maximize opportunities to conserve paper in printed documents:

- Create electronic publications.
- Work with printers on printing efficiencies that conserve paper.
- Use standard paper sizes, double-sided printing, lower paper weights and on-demand printing.
- Print only summaries or updates instead of full documents.
- Use accurate lists to eliminate duplicate and wasteful mailings.
- Eliminate, size down and reuse envelopes.

Alternatives

Today, 500 recycled printing and writing papers are available in North America. Studies reveal that recycled papers equal virgin papers in performance and many are priced competitively.

Yet, all recycled papers now account for less than 10 percent of the paper market. Due to industry consolidation, a dozen recycled paper mills shut down between 2000-2002. Myths, such as the belief that all paper is recycled or that recycled paper has poor quality, exacerbates this situation.

Buyers can stimulate the market for recycled papers without hurting budgets or sacrificing quality by phasing in progressively higher post-consumer contents, beginning with 30 percent post-consumer content and reaching a minimum of 80 percent post-consumer content. (Post-consumer content signifies that the fibers came from paper that was recycled.)

Agricultural fiber papers also exist. Cost savings incurred from the paper reduction strategies can off-set the procurement of "tree-free" papers. Kenaf and hemp fibers require less bleaching and have long fibers which help to increase the number of times that a paper can be recycled. Ag-residue papers—containing the stalks that remain once a crop has been harvested—avoid the need to burn or landfill these wastes.

Bleaching

The paper industry has reduced the amount of chlorine it uses to bleach paper; however, its reliance on "Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF)" bleaching continues to release

dioxin—a potent environmental toxin. Environmentally preferable paper is chlorine free—either Processed Chlorine Free (PCF) or Totally Chlorine Free (TCF).

Beyond Office Paper

Post-consumer recycled janitorial papers, such as tissues, can be used. Packaging can be eliminated, reduced and made of recycled fibers. Reusable, recycled or ag-based alternatives can replace disposable bags, plates and cups. Excessive holiday paper consumption can be eliminated.

Paper Users

Various campaigns are underway to force large paper users and sellers to increase their recycled content paper. The federal government must purchase 30 percent post-consumer recycled paper—the minimum standard set under President Clinton's *Greening the Government Executive Orders*. Many states and cities have also adopted buy-recycled paper policies, but implementation is spotty. Corporations driven by economic benefits and consumer campaigns have implemented paper reduction and buy recycled programs. University students, faculty and staff are also examining their paper consumption habits.

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Resources

- Campus Ecology, www.nwf.org/campusecology
- Conservatree, www.conservatree.org
- Green Press Initiative, www.greenpressinitiative.org
- Magazine Paper Project, www.EcoPaperAction.org
- Paper Buying Clubs, www.woodconsumption.org/issues/clubs
- Resource Conservation Alliance, www.woodconsumption.org
- ReThink Paper, www.rethink.org
- Tree-Free Campus, www.ran.org/ran_campaigns/old_growth/campus
- University Press Campaign, www.woodconsumption.org/universitypress
- Staples Campaign, www.stopstaples.net
- WoodWise Consumer Guide, www.woodwise.org

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