

A Greener Office- Paper

Source: The Green Office (www.thegreenoffice.com)

The widespread use of non-recycled paper promotes the clear-cutting of rapidly shrinking forestland. Deforestation exacerbates global warming, threatens the homes of indigenous peoples, and wipes out the habitats of thousands of animal and plant species worldwide. Deforestation is also a leading cause of the unprecedented rate of extinction over the last century. In addition, about 80% of paper is made by a process known as chemical pulping. This process often leads to water pollution, especially when enforcement and regulation are lax. Elemental chlorine is commonly used to remove lignin and brighten pulp. During this process, chlorine can form chlorinated organic compounds, which, if introduced into the environment can disrupt normal human hormonal behavior. Every ton of paper that is not recycled leads to the use of 17 trees, 42,000 kWh of energy, 26,000 liters of water, and releases 27 kgs of pollutants into the air.

Buying Guide

When buying paper consider the two P's: Pulp and Process. Because most pulp these days is made from unsustainably harvested trees, it is important to purchase paper made from recycled content. Post-consumer recycled content is best because it closes a material-use loop that does not rely on fresh-cut trees. Post-industrial recycled content sometimes simply labeled recycled content is excess material from manufacturing that has been diverted from the industrial waste stream and incorporated into new paper. Thought not as beneficial as post-consumer content, it is a better choice than non-recycled paper. The second characteristic to consider when choosing paper is whether or not it was processed using chlorine. There are presently three chlorine-conscious paper options. Paper that is Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF) is usually made from non-recycled pulp that contains minimal chlorine derivatives. Paper that is Totally Chlorine Free (TCF) is virgin pulp that contains no chlorine whatsoever. Processed Chlorine Free (PCF) paper refers to paper made from recycled pulp, which may contain chlorine remnants, but is not produced with additional chlorine.

Paper Option	Recommendation	Comments
Recycled-Post Consumer	Best	This is the recycled paper with the lowest impact on the environment--look for papers with high post-consumer content
Recycled-Pre Consumer	Very good	Also a great option for recycled paper
Totally Chlorine Free	Best	TCF paper has the least potential environmental impact
Alternative Fiber	Good	Purchasing this paper type eliminates many of the concerns associated with deforestation
Virgin Paper	Avoid	The most harmful type of paper available; however, sometimes no alternative exists-- so use sparingly.

Best Practices

- Use both sides of the paper.
- Only print documents that you really need.
- Consider sharing copies of reports within the office instead of printing a copy for each staff member.
- Use electronic documents to circulate internal memos or create a message board where memos and office-wide correspondences will need to be posted only once.
- Maximize margin use: Increasing your page margins will decrease your paper consumption.
- Shred sensitive documents and use as packaging material.