



**GreenTip**  
How Do You Measure Up?



## **Green Paper – Complete the Recycling Loop**

Why do we recycle? I think almost everyone, non-recyclers included, would be able to say that we recycle in order to divert usable materials from landfills and reintroduce them to the manufacturing stream in place of virgin materials. But the commitment to recycle shouldn't end with collecting household materials in the recycling bin and putting it out at the curb on collection day. In order to make recycling work, we have to buy goods that are made with the materials we recycle. A simple concept, right?

### **What's the Scoop on Paper?**

The average American uses more than 700 pounds of paper every year. That includes newspapers, magazines, cardboard and chipboard boxes and other types of product packaging. According to the American Forest and Paper Association, we achieved an all-time high of 56% recovery of used paper in 2007. That's more than 54 million tons of paper – or 360 pounds of paper per person -- recycled! The paper industry has set a goal of 60% paper recovery by 2012. If our usage rate remains constant, that means in just 3 years we'll be recycling more than 58 million tons of paper in the United States alone! Those are impressive numbers.

### **Complete the Paper Recycling Loop**

Here are some numbers that are not so impressive. More than 90% of all printing and writing paper manufactured in this country is made from virgin tree fiber. That accounts for nearly half of all logged trees!

Because paper fibers break down during the recycling process, virgin materials will always be part of paper manufacturing. However, we can make a huge difference in our use of trees for paper by making the commitment to purchase paper products with recycled content. Because this can be confusing, the EPA has set forth standards and recommendations in their Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG's). The CPG's set purchasing guidelines for federal agencies, but they can easily be applied to household purchasing as well.

Before you head out to the store, there are a few terms you need to understand:

- **Post Consumer Fiber** – paper that is recovered from homes and offices; this does not include scraps and overruns that result from the manufacturing process.
- **Recovered Fiber** – paper that results from mill and printer overruns, newsstand returns, damaged or obsolete paper stock and scrap leftover after the papermaking process is complete and post-consumer fiber; recovered fiber is paper that must be re-pulped and cannot simply be re-cut or re-packaged for reuse.
- **Mill Broke** – scrap fiber generated in a paper mill during or prior to the completion of the papermaking process.

Here are the CPG's for some of the more common household paper products:

- **Bathroom Tissue** – 20% to 60% post-consumer fiber; 20% to 100% total recovered fiber.
- **Facial Tissue** – 10% to 15% post-consumer fiber; 10% to 100% total recovered fiber.
- **Paper Towels** – 40% to 60% post-consumer fiber; 40% to 100% total recovered fiber.
- **Paper Napkins** – 30% to 60% post-consumer fiber; 30% to 100% total recovered fiber.
- **Office Paper** – includes printer paper, tablets, notebook paper, stationery and envelopes – 30% post-consumer fiber; 30% total recovered fiber.
- **Checks** – 10% post-consumer fiber; 10% total recovered fiber.
- **Coated Paper** – used for printing photos or posters – 10% post-consumer fiber; 10% total recovered fiber.
- **File Folders** – 30% post-consumer fiber; 30% total recovered fiber.
- **Chipboard Boxes** – used for Kleenex, snacks, rolls for paper towels and toilet tissue – 75% to 100% post-consumer fiber; 90% to 100% total recovered fiber.
- **Cardboard** – 25% post-consumer fiber; 25% to 50% total recovered fiber.
- **Brown Paper and Paper Bags** – 5% to 20% post-consumer fiber; 5% to 40% total recovered fiber.
- **Padded Mailers** – 5% to 15% post-consumer fiber; 5% to 15% total recovered fiber.

The magazines and catalogs you receive at home should also be printed on recycled content paper. Look for a post-consumer recycled content of at least 10%. Your daily newspaper should be printed on recycled content paper stock with a 20% to 85% post-consumer fiber content and up to 100% total recovered fiber.

Armed with this information, you will be able to make informed decisions about the paper products and products with paper packaging that you purchase. Remember, your choices send a clear message to manufacturers about what you, as a consumer, expect from the marketplace.



**When it comes to taking care of our environment....**

**How do you MEASURE UP?**