
SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT Paper

1. How to reduce paper use

The most sustainable paper use option is to avoid using paper in the first place. The following consumption practices will reduce your overall paper use.

- Double-sided printing and double-sided copying;
- Think before you print- instead of printing, file information and emails electronically;
- Collect and reuse one side printed paper;
- Recycle used paper by separating paper waste from residual waste;
- Use laptops and projectors for meetings rather than printing out pages of agendas and minutes.

2. What to consider when procuring paper?

2.1 Virgin Fibre Origin

Virgin fibre content refers to the fibres used in the paper production process that have been sourced directly from harvested or felled forests. Paper that is not 100% recycled content will contain a percentage of virgin fibre. When purchasing paper with virgin fibre content a key consideration needs to be where the fibres were sourced.

Paper products labelled with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) or Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certifications come with a level of environmental assurance that sustainable management of forests has been promoted.

2.2 Recycled Content

Choosing recycled paper reduces the demand for virgin pulp and reduces resource consumption during the manufacturing process. Recycled content can either refer to pre-consumer material (meaning waste from paper mills and manufacturing plants) or post-consumer material (meaning discarded paper which can no longer be used for its intended purpose). Generally, the higher the post-consumer waste content the greater the environmental benefits¹.

2.3 Bleaching

Traditionally, the bleaching process which is undertaken to whiten or brighten paper used elemental chlorine and resulted in the release of highly toxic and persistent organochlorines into the environment². The use of elemental chlorine as a bleaching agent in the paper manufacturing process has now been phased out and Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF) bleaching has become the dominant bleaching process worldwide. Totally Chlorine Free (TCF) and Processed Chlorine Free (PCF) bleaching processes use bleaching agents that do not contain any chlorine compounds.

2.4 Package materials

The production of packaging products utilises significant resources and generates environmental impacts. Using unbleached paper or cardboard packaging with a high recycled content will reduce environmental impacts.

2.5 Carbon neutral

A carbon neutral product is one where the net greenhouse gas emissions associated with the product are zero through a combination of reducing carbon emissions and purchasing carbon offsets. Claims of carbon neutrality need to be independently verified by reliable third parties or standards. The National Carbon Offset Standard is the only Australian Government endorsed carbon neutral certification in Australia.

Further information

For further information on sustainable procurement or other sustainability initiatives at UQ www.uq.edu.au/sustainability

References

¹ Local Government NSW, *Sustainable Choice Fact Sheet 1- Copy Paper*, viewed 20 August 2014, <http://www.lgnsw.org.au/files/imce-uploads/39/copy-paper-factsheet.pdf>

² Australian Productivity Commission, *Pulp and Paper: Bleaching and the Environment*, viewed 20 August 2014, <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/pulp-paper>