

Glossary

Recycled Paper-Recycled paper is a broad term with multiple variations. Plainly stated, recycled paper is a grade of paper that contains recycled (postconsumer and/or presconsumer) fiber. There are recycled paper grades that range from 10% postconsumer to 100% postconsumer recycled. The U.S. EPA has developed guidelines for federally funded purchases that require a minimum of 30% post-consumer content for uncoated printing and writing paper. These standards are generally accepted as de facto (but voluntary) national standards.

Virgin Fiber Paper-Virgin fiber paper is manufactured without the use of any recycled or alternative fibers. Trees are the typical source of the virgin fiber used in the papermaking process. However, virgin fibers can be sourced from agricultural by-products and alternative fibers.

Postconsumer Fiber-Executive Order 13101 defines "postconsumer material" as a material or finished product that has served its intended use and has been discarded for disposal or recovery having completed its life as a consumer item. This is a preferred fiber because it is used in the production of new products instead of being incinerated or sent to a landfill. Recovered office paper waste makes up the majority of postconsumer fiber content that is used to make recycled copy and printing papers.

Preconsumer Fiber-Pre-consumer fiber materials have not been used and then recycled by a consumer (you and me). These materials include: paper and envelope trimmings, and deinked pre-consumer material. Pulp fiber that is derived from books, magazines, and newspapers is termed pre-consumer.

Processed Chlorine Free-"Processed Chlorine Free" (PCF) refers to recycled paper in which the recycled content is bleached without chlorine or chlorine derivatives. Typically, PCF papers are often bleached using Hydrogen Peroxide, Oxygen or Ozone. When paper pulp is bleached, the bleaching agent chlorine is combined with lignin to form toxic compounds known as dioxin and furans. These compounds bioaccumulate and are known to cause serious health problems in both animals and humans. Thus, papers that are processed without chlorine are the environmentally preferred choice.

Elemental Chlorine Free-"Elemental Chlorine Free" (ECF) applies to paper processed without elemental chlorine but with a chlorine derivative known as chlorine dioxide. ECF papers meet EPA regulations for bleaching and chlorine is "non-detectable" by standard required government tests in the effluent of mills that use an ECF bleaching process. Despite these non-detectable levels, more sensitive tests show that small amounts of chlorine are present - making the ECF process not the environmentally preferable bleaching practice.

Totally Chlorine Free-"Totally Chlorine Free" (TCF) applies to virgin fiber papers that are unbleached or processed with a sequence that includes no chlorine or chlorine derivatives.

Alternative Fibers-There are many types of alternative fibers including: hemp, kenaf, cotton, and agricultural by-products such as cereal straws and corn stalks, which have previously been treated as a waste stream.