

WE HAVEN'T GONE GREEN. WE WERE BORN GREEN.™

GREEN CLEANING FOR DUMMIES:
REPRINT OF CHAPTER 12




ATLAS™
PAPER MILLS

Atlas Paper Mills proudly sponsored a seminar featuring Stephen Ashkin, “BEYOND CLEAN: Advanced Environmental Discussion for Executives” at the 2008 ISSA show. Atlas Paper Mills prides itself on being a truly Green company. Because of our strong commitment to the environment and the industry we think the information in Chapter 12 is both motivating and relevant and uniquely reflects Atlas’ vision and its dedication to the industry and the environment.



PART III: THE GREEN CLEANING TOOLBOX

CHAPTER 12: CHOOSING GREEN JANITORIAL PAPER PRODUCTS

IN THIS CHAPTER

- ✿ Grasping “recycled content”
- ✿ Finding alternatives to bleaching
- ✿ Looking at the impact of dispensers
- ✿ Glimpsing future developments

Just try to get through a day without touching paper – we dare you. The amount of paper products a person uses each day is astounding, and a good portion of that is in the form of *janitorial paper products* – toilet paper, paper towels, and so on. In fact, more than 25 million trees are cut down to create janitorial paper in the United States every year! Using green paper takes a heckuva burden off the environment, and doesn’t add a financial burden now that most janitorial paper products that have recycled content are priced competitively with virgin paper products.

At present, most janitorial paper products have no recycled content. By requesting and using recycled paper, you help create the demand that builds capacity in the paper industry (they’ll make it if people request it). Using paper with recycled content significantly helps protect the environment, and our health depends on a healthy environment.

In this chapter, we take a look at what you need to know to purchase the greenest, healthiest janitorial paper products.



DEMISTIFYING ‘RECYCLED CONTENT’

Understanding recycled content – which in the case of paper means material that doesn’t come directly from virgin tree pulp – is a little more complicated than you might think. It breaks down as follows on the labels of the products you buy:

- ☛ **Total recycled content** refers to all recycled materials regardless of where they come from. It might include manufacturing scraps and waste. It’s distinguished from post-consumer waste in that it never leaves the factory before being reused.
- ☛ **Post-consumer content** is the material that was collected after products were purchased, used and discarded. When you toss out a newspaper, it becomes post-consumer waste.

Post-consumer is a designation that was specifically established by the Environmental Protection Agency to encourage the development of curbside household recycling. The challenge was getting more than 100 million homes (which can be looked at as 100 million small generators of waste) to recycle their materials, as opposed to sending them to the landfill or burning them.

Post-consumer recycling is a challenge because not only do consumers have to be educated to recycle, the infrastructure to collect and process recyclables cost effectively has to be built.

Pre-consumer recycling is waste that’s collected straight from a factory – for example, magazines collected from a printer who has made too many copies. This kind of waste is easier to find, separate, and manage. It’s easy to get in large quantities, cheaper to sort, and easier to sell.

The Environmental Protection Agency encourages the use of post-consumer products to help build enough participation of homeowners to generate enough volume to make the curbside pickup system cost-effective. Thus, we can help enormously by purchasing products specifically made with post-consumer content and by educating occupants about the importance of recycling and to help the recycling efforts in our buildings succeed.

Furthermore, federal agencies are required by law (Resources Conservation and Recovery Act, Section 6002) to buy recycled products with post-consumer content. This requirement is part of what’s called the Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG). Until the industry can reach 100 percent post-consumer recycled content, the CPG calls for the following:

Material	PCR content
Toilet Tissue	20% to 60%
Facial Tissue	10% to 15%
Hand Towels	40% to 60%
Industrial Wipes	At least 40%

For more information about the EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines, please visit www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/procure/products/tissue.htm.

Quality among these products varies. Simply because a product has a high amount of post-consumer or total recycled content does not mean that the product is of poor quality. You can find many very good products with a large amount of post-consumer recycled content. As with any other product, you need to evaluate the options in your facility.

THE DOWNSIDE OF BLEACHING

Most paper is bleached to make it perfectly white. The traditional bleaching process uses elemental chlorine or chlorine dioxide. When chlorine enters the environment where it mixes with other naturally occurring organic material in the waste stream it can produce dioxins and furans, which are some of the most deadly chemicals on the face of the earth (they cause cancer and developmental problems in humans, and they’re *persistent in the environment* – that is, they don’t go away).

Furthermore, one of the major production methods of chlorine requires the use of mercury cells, which release mercury, a heavy metal and known neurotoxin and developmental toxin into the environment.



In recent years, many paper mills have invested tens of millions of dollars to eliminate elemental chlorine originally used in their bleaching process and replace it with chlorine dioxide. This process is known as *elemental chlorine free* or ECF. It doesn't eliminate completely the use of chlorine, but chlorine dioxide reduces the amount of harmful byproducts by more than 90 percent and is a superior green alternative to traditional paper bleached with elemental chlorine.

Other paper mills have gone one step further and use nonchlorinated methods such as hydrogen peroxide for bleaching. This bleaching process even further reduces the inadvertent production of dioxins and is known as *process chlorine free* or PCF.

Although most of the programs that have served as the roadmap for product standards in this chapter require the use of paper products with a high amount of post-consumer recycled content fiber, these same programs typically identify the issues associated with bleaching and encourage or prefer the use of process chlorine free (PCF) products but don't require it.

Janitorial paper is a high-touch item. Choosing the best paper products for your facility begins with identifying candidates from those that meet the minimum CPG standards, Green Seal standards GS-01 and GS09 Environmental Choice standards CCD-082 and CCD-086, and those endorsed by the CFPA. These candidates should then be evaluated by your team for cost, availability, and acceptance by the building occupants.

DISPENSERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The style of paper and type of dispenser can have a significant impact on paper usage, waste, health, and costs:

✿ Hands-free paper towel dispensers that eliminate cranks and levers cut down on the germs that are passed from person to person and improve the protection of occupant health. **Note:** You don't have to change the battery-operated or electric dispensers that deliver a towel when your hand is waved in front of an electric eye. Although these can be effective and attractive dispensers, the simple version that leaves some exposed paper to be pulled is equally effective in protecting against the transmission of germs and eliminates batteries and motors along with the environmental impacts associated with the production of energy and all the other components.

✿ Large rolls of toilet paper reduce packaging waste, are typically cheaper than many smaller rolls, and reduce the labor needed to change the rolls. This cuts down on costs and complaints from toilet-tissue dispensers being empty. It also eliminates the waste from replacing small rolls that might otherwise run out before the custodians plan to return to service the restroom.

✿ Replacing C-fold and multifold towel dispensers with roll towel products and hands-free dispensers not only eliminates waste, but saves money and labor to restock the dispensers. (People tend to pull out – and thereby waste – more C-fold towels than they need.)

Make sure that when you consider the benefits, you also consider the costs for changing dispensers. Your paper supplier or distributor will often help defray these costs when you commit to a longer-term contract.

What about electric, hot-air hand dryers? There are environmental benefits to be had by switching to energy-efficient electric hand dryers, which don't use tree fiber, reduce environmental impacts from manufacturing, and virtually eliminate waste.

But our personal bias comes from a health standpoint. From a public health perspective, nothing is more important than hand washing. Thus, things that encourage hand washing are preferable to those that discourage hand washing. After 25 years in the cleaning industry, our experience has been that people prefer paper when both are available. So, if an electric dryer discourages people from washing their hands, it's not a good thing – even if the number of people discouraged is small.

We're also concerned about what happens to the water from people's hands. The typical procedure for using an electric dryer is to shake the excess water from our hands. But where does that water go? If the excess water is being flicked onto floors it can lead to slips and falls. And on both floors and walls it can contribute to mold and other problems.

When high-velocity air blows the water droplets off hands, where do those droplets go? And perhaps more importantly, what are those droplets potentially contaminated with? An airborne particle potentially contaminated with pathogenic organisms doesn't seem like a good option, especially when another option is so readily available. Thus our preference for paper.



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