



Recycling: The environmental advantages

Paper production and paper waste management impact on the environment in all sorts of ways.

One of the biggest problems in the past has been the disposal of waste paper after it has been used, and of by-products of the paper manufacturing process such as chemicals, bleach, dyes and paper slurry.

Recycled paper and its increased use by businesses large and small is now helping to redress the balance and reduce the impact of the global paper industry on our planet's ecosystem.

It achieves this in the following four ways;

- By reducing the amount of paper that goes into landfill – a major source of green house gases.
- By reducing the amount of paper that is incinerated, lowering CO₂ emissions ash and slag waste.
- By consuming less energy in production.
- By using less water in production.

At the same time, today's recycled papers offer high quality reproduction and a premium look and feel that make them suitable for even the most 'prestigious' applications.

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Paper and landfill

Global paper production and consumption generates an enormous amount of waste, a good deal of which ends up as landfill.

Once in the ground, paper products decompose to produce methane – one of the most powerful and abundant of greenhouse gases and a major cause of climate change

Recycling paper waste helps redress the problem by keeping it out of landfill where, apart from the environmental damage it causes, it can also create an unsightly nuisance for local communities.

To incinerate or not to incinerate

Before widespread concerns about the environment, a common way to dispose of paper waste was to burn it. In some parts of the world, incineration is still the primary method of paper waste disposal.

However, the drawbacks of incineration compared to recycling, make it a less than favourable way to deal with waste paper products:

Firstly, it produces harmful waste in the form of ash, slag and CO₂ – another major contributor to global warming.

Secondly, it takes far more energy to incinerate a given volume of paper than it does to recycle it.*

And thirdly, it means new wood pulp must be harvested to replace the material that has been burnt.

* (source:)

Review of existing LCA studies on the recycling and disposal of paper and cardboard. European Topic Centre on Waste and Material Flows, April 2004