

Why You Should Use Green Paper

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It has sometimes been difficult to know just what "green" means when it comes to paper products used in hotels. Fortunately, it's a bit easier today now that **GreenSeal**, the Environmental Protection Agency and other third-party certification boards have set guidelines and standards defining just what green means when it comes to commercial paper products. Hotel managers and housekeepers can now be confident that such items have been tested and proven to conform to strict environmentally responsible standards.

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The EPA's standards for green paper products are as follows:

- Toilet paper: 20 percent post-consumer recycled content*
- Hand towels: 40 percent post-consumer recycled content

Green Seal's GS-01 and GS-09 standards have the following criterion:

- Paper towels and toilet paper: 100 percent recovered materials
- Paper towels: 40 percent post-consumer content
- Toilet paper: 20 percent post-consumer content

It's no surprise that paper made from recycled or recovered materials with a high percentage of post-consumer content are "more green" than conventional paper products. Going beyond that, however, green paper also minimizes or eliminates the use of bleach in the manufacturing process. Bleach, a whitening agent, can be detrimental to the environment and surrounding water supplies.

Hotels Lead the Way

The hospitality industry has been remarkably influential in implementing more environmentally friendly operating procedures. For hotel chains, which are some of the largest users of paper products, transferring to green paper products can have a big impact. Toilet paper, for example, is responsible for more than 15 percent of all deforestation, and according to the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), deforestation is the single greatest cause of global warming in the world today.

In addition to deforestation, the NRDC has noted that water resources are negatively affected by paper manufacturing. Huge amounts of water are used during the process of turning trees into paper, presenting a significant challenge in areas already experiencing water shortfalls. And as mentioned earlier, the use of chlorine-based bleach in paper manufacturing can pollute local water systems, especially in developing countries; this diminishes potable water supplies even further.

With these factors in mind, the importance of using green paper products is quite clear. In fact, the need to become more responsible with all paper products, both within and outside of the hotel industry, is becoming self-evident.

What More Can Hotels Do?

Hotel facilities can enhance their sustainability efforts in other ways beyond simply selecting green-certified and EPA-approved paper products. For instance, hotels can select higher-quality toilet paper and paper towels, which are typically more absorbent compared to lower grade options. This tends to result in less waste as well as higher customer satisfaction.

Choosing large-roll paper products (instead of folded rolls or smaller rolls) and coreless rolls leads to less waste as well. Manufacturing and disposal of toilet paper cores is an important environmental issue that deserves attention.

Another important consideration when it comes to green paper is cost. But this is now less of a concern than many buyers might realize. As with many recently introduced eco-friendly products, some green paper products were originally more costly than their conventional counterparts. However, technology and certification have helped lower these price points while increasing performance levels—and more improvements are expected in the years ahead.

Today, hotel guests notice and appreciate green efforts, and the result is high customer satisfaction and repeat business. As we have seen, green paper is also a major facet of sustainability—and since the worldwide hotel industry depends on quality paper products, it is in a prime position to promote and market sustainability in this area. Hotels can leverage their pioneer status and serve as role models for other industries and market segments that are considering sustainable paper supply options. Sustainability is the future of our industry.

*David Holly is the director for green contractors with **The Ashkin Group**, the professional cleaning industry's leading advocacy group for green cleaning. His 25 years of industry experience include time spent as the vice president of a regional BSC, director of sales & marketing for S.C. Johnson Professional and marketing director for Multi-Clean.*

*The term *postconsumer* refers to waste produced by the end consumer of a material. *Recovered material* refers to fiber waste such as envelope cuttings, bindery trimmings, printing waste and cuttings, and other converting waste generated after the completion of a manufacturing process.