

## Choice is Powerful

With the continual introduction of new electronics and their widening distribution, it can be easy to think that the issue of recycling paper is somewhat in the past. However, this is certainly not the case. In fact, one of the main offenders of paper pollution may be lurking in your very own mailbox.

Paper making is a substantial process involving many different processes including debarking, chipping, washing, bleaching, burning, beating, refining, pressing, drying, and flattening to name just a few. Each process has specific energy requirements for each stage of paper generation. The extensive process has significant environmental impacts. According to the National Pollutant Release Inventory (1996), pulp and paper is the third largest polluter to air, water and land in both Canada and the United States. It is said to release well over 100 million kg of toxic pollution each year. Environmental issues encompassed through the many processes in paper making include deforestation, air pollution, water pollution and chemical waste. At least 40% of the solid mass that makes up our landfills is paperboard waste and paper. Paper manufacturing is the largest industrial user of water per pound of finished product and the third largest user of fossil fuels worldwide. But the staggering fact is that a lot of the energy and resources put into making the paper is completely wasted. In the United States alone, more than 100 million trees' worth of junk mail arrives in mail boxes each year.

But what does this have to do with you? Considering if you cut your bulk mail for 5 years, you'll conserve the equivalent of 1.7 trees, 700 gallons of water and prevent 460 pounds of carbon dioxide from being released into the air - it has quite a lot to do with you. Taking a few simple initiatives to eliminate junk mail and even paper waste in general can mean significant preservation of the earth and its resources.

1. Place a "no junk mail" sticker on your letterbox
2. Notify agencies that you do not wish to receive their mail
3. Reuse any junk mail you receive as scratch paper
4. Request that you receive company notifications via email
5. Visit websites such as [www.catalogues4you.com.au](http://www.catalogues4you.com.au) for online shopping catalogues from many major Australian stores
6. Print pages that are double sided
7. Reuse scrap paper instead of buying sticky notes

By eliminating the amount of junk mail that makes it to your letterbox, you can help protect the environment from the effects of not only the paper-making industry, also but the paper delivery. Great quantities of fuel are used in transporting paper to storage warehouses, and then on to

distributers before it even reaches your doorstep. Many companies opt for the cheaper, non-specific delivery of junk mail to a designated area, requiring even greater amounts of fuel and producing even greater carbon emissions than its targeted delivery counterpart.

The benefits of paper recycling are enormous, including reduction of greenhouse gases, extension of the fibre supply, conservation of landfill space, and reduction of water and energy consumption. However, there is much you can do to reduce fuel consumption within the paper delivery industry as well. Paper recycling is a prominent issue in our society today - a prominent issue that YOU can do something about.

## References

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