



 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Think inside the green box

Dec 1, 2008 12:00 PM, By Patrick Barnard

A look at eco-friendly packing materials



Going green isn't just about printing your catalog on recycled paper. Multichannel merchants today have many opportunities to reduce their carbon footprints — particularly when it comes to the packing material or dunnage they use in fulfilling orders.

Thanks to the current trend toward greening the supply chain, there's more interest in sustainable packaging, including paper fill, molded pulp and degradable loose-fill. A recent study from market research firm Freedonia shows that demand for eco-friendly protective packaging in the U.S. will grow 4.6% annually over the next four years.

Eco-friendly products are typically made from recycled materials, but some are made from virgin materials and designed to be less harmful to the environment. (Some vendors show their "green-ness" by emphasizing that their products can be reused or recycled or are renewable.)

Merchants have long had the perception that earth-friendly dunnage costs more than new packaging. But manufacturers stress that many green packaging products today are less expensive than virgin-based packing material — especially paper-based products.

Another common misperception is that eco-friendly packaging products don't perform as well as virgin-based products. Naturally, the manufacturers stress that this isn't true: Eco-friendly products are designed to perform just as well as virgin packing material — or they wouldn't sell.

Several vendors concede that one thing does tend to be true about some eco-friendly products: They often aren't as pretty to look at.

The bottom line is that less is more when it comes to consumers' perception of dunnage. No customer wants her porcelain tea set to arrive broken. But a box overflowing with packing peanuts is also annoying.

Many shippers now use a mix of packaging products to consume overall less material. That's why air cushions are so popular — plus, they can be reused.

But manufacturers say that no green effort really pays off unless consumers do their part and actually recycle or renew the items. That's why some vendors now offer their own recycling programs in which they invite shippers and consumers to return their packaging materials to them so they can be recycled.

Part of that is educating the consumer on how the packing material was made or how to reuse or recycle it. Many shippers using green products are looking for cobranding opportunities in which they can have their brand logo printed on the packaging materials, along with a message that tells their customers they're being eco-friendly.

Use of the “chasing arrows” recycling logo, as well as certification logos, such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) on the packaging, has become common — it tells customers that the materials are recyclable or eco-friendly. Most vendors are now working with their customers to help them drive home the message that they're being green.

How can you be greener when it comes to dunnage? Here's a look at some of the latest eco-friendly offerings from a few suppliers of protective packaging products:

iCONFORMER: Envelopes from milk jugs

Conformer Expansion Products, which makes eco-friendly marketing and mailing products, recently announced that its Conformer plastic expansion envelope is now made with 75% post-consumer material — specifically, recycled milk jugs. The expandable envelopes are good for shipping large sales or media kits, as well as large catalogs or bundles of other marketing materials.

Conformer has introduced several new green products in 2008, including FSC-certified paper envelopes, presentation folders and mailers, as well as paperboard mailers made from 85% post-consumer content. The manufacturing plant that makes the Conformer plastic expansion envelope for the company reuses 90% of post-industrial materials for other jobs, and sells the remaining 10% for reuse in other plastic applications.

iPREGIS: Astro-Foam Renew

Manufacturer Pregis recently launched Astro-Foam Renew, a low-density polyethylene foam sheet made with up to 35% pre-consumer recycled content. The company says the decreased dependence on 100% virgin resin contributes to the conservation of petroleum-derived raw materials. Astro-Foam Renew comes in 1/8" thickness and is used for a variety of packaging and non-packaging applications. The regrind content (of ground up polystyrene scraps) ranges from 15% to 35%, with an average of 25%. The amount of pre-consumer content used depends on the scrap availability and quality.

Astro-Foam Renew provides surface protection, interleaving and void fill for applications such as produce, china, fixtures, furniture, glassware, lighting and more. Because the product is tear-resistant, the company says it works well for shipping heavier items with sharp edges.

Astro-Foam Renew is available in rolls and sheets — or it can be converted into pouches. It can also be laminated to adhesive or cohesive film, kraft paper, polyethylene films or foil to achieve additional performance properties.

iRANPAK: Recycled paper packaging

Ranpak, which specializes in paper packaging, recently launched two new fanfold paper products consisting of 100% recycled paper.

The 30-lb. paper bundles are available in both 15" and 30" roll widths, and consist of a combination of double-lined kraft, old corrugated containers, natural kraft, post-consumer bag, liner board and post-consumer waste. There is no virgin pulp used in the process of producing the paper, which is 100% biodegradable.

Tara Foote, director of marketing for Ranpak, says this new paper performs as well as other fanfold products that use a higher percentage of virgin material. It also adheres to strict environmental procedures for recycled content and manufacturing processes.

iSEALED AIR: PackTiger and Yesterday's News

Protective packaging company Sealed Air recently rolled out the PackTiger system, which produces up to 150 paper pads per minute, yet it is more compact than traditional paper packaging systems. PackTiger produces custom-length, pad-like paper cushioning material from rolls of multi-ply kraft paper.

The system features a control panel that can store up to 24 TigerPad material configurations for any combination of quantity and length. Operators can also use the one-touch access buttons to produce three commonly used pad configurations already programmed into the system. In manual mode, the operator can produce cushions at the push of a button or foot pedal.

Find this article at:

<http://www.multichannelmerchant.com/opsandfulfillment/1201-ecofriendly-packing-materials/index.html>

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

◆ 2008 Penton Media, Inc. All rights reserved.