

Guide to Sustainable Purchase and Use of Paper Products

Updated on: December 27, 2017 by AALL SR-SIS Committee on Environmental Sustainability

Legal organizations are moving from print to electronic formats for correspondence and information resources. Still, a recent study says the average attorney uses about 80,000 sheets or 160 reams of paper each year. The environmental cost of this consumption includes 47 gallons of water per ream, about one ton of carbon dioxide emissions per 400 reams and destruction of forests around the world. Wise purchasing and conservation can have a large positive effect on the environment.

Key Environmental & Social Benefits: By reducing paper consumption or by purchasing certified sustainable paper products you significantly lower atmospheric carbon dioxide pollution, reduce demand for clean water, save forests, and protect the culture and lives of indigenous peoples who rely on healthy forest ecosystems. Sustainably managed forests also provide lasting economic benefits derived from forest products.

For more information contact: [SR-SIS Committee on Environmental Sustainability](#)

Key Actions:

- A) Reduce office paper use by printing only when necessary on double-sides
- B) Purchase paper products (office paper, toilet paper, etc.) that are certified sustainable by a reputable independent entity like the [Forest Stewardship Council](#) (FSC).
- C) Purchase paper products containing at least 50% recycled content.

Selected resources and guides:

[Green Libraries: Paper Use and Recycling](#) (University Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

[Paper Calculator](#) (Environmental Paper Network) “The Paper Calculator is the premier tool for measuring the environmental impacts of paper and discovering the best paper choices.”

[Paper Tools & Guidance for Buyers and Producers](#) (World Wildlife Fund) “To reduce the environmental footprint of paper production and paper consumption, WWF offers a one-stop paper toolbox to help guide paper producers as well as commercial and individual paper buyers.”

[Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines for Paper and Paper Products](#) (Environmental Protection Agency)

[Office Paper & WasteWise](#) (American Bar Association)

[What is FSC-certified paper?](#) (Mother Nature Network)