Quality Goes Green

By Ray Harkins

According the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, "Levels of carbon dioxide and other 'greenhouse gases' in the atmosphere have risen steeply during the industrial era owning to human activities … spurred on by economic and population growth." Many scientists claim that these gases trap heat energy in the Earth's lower atmosphere. And as these levels continue to rise, the resulting overall rise in temperature could disrupt natural patterns of climate. This concept – the accumulation of greenhouse gases leading to climatic disruptions – is a long standing concern in the modern environmental movement.

Carbon dioxide (CO_2), accounting for 50% of the estimated effect of all greenhouse gases, occurs naturally in the atmosphere, but its emission is dramatically increased by deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels. Both of these CO_2 contributors can be lessened by the reduction and recycling of paper products. While scientific and political debates surrounding these environmental issues may continue for decades, it's tough to disagree with wisdom of practicing the conservation of natural resources at the local level. In addition to the potential environmental benefits, implementing these practices in our quality labs and manufacturing facilities are further justified through a reduction in office supply and trash removal costs.

Even in this generation of instant electronic communication, quality labs are notorious for consuming and accumulating large hoards of paper. Paper-based SPC charts, reports, layouts and memos all draw from our natural resources and absorb profits from our company's bottom line. By following the three R's – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle – we can practice conservation and help our organizations compete in the global market place.

Reduce

The best way to reduce paper waste is to eliminate the sources that generate it. The following practical tips will start your office on the road to paper reduction.

- Covert paper-based documents to electronic ones. Many reports and schedules are printed and distributed out of habit. Emailing and reading electronic documents is faster, cheaper and greener.
- Eliminate unnecessary copies. Determine the essential recipients for each printed document. One easy way to determine who actually uses a document is to simply stop sending it. Add to your distribution list anyone who complains.
- Condense your printed pages. Most printers have settings to print on both sides of the paper, or to print two pages on one side. Use one or both of these settings to reduce your paper usage in half or more.
- Eliminate Junk Mail. Catalog companies and direct mailers survive by advertising their wares. If you are no longer interested in a company's product or service, call or email them to have your name removed from their mailing list. This will save time and waste at both organizations.

Reuse

Regardless of your paper reduction efforts, labs and offices will generate paper that is eventually discarded. By reusing paper, its negative impacts are reduced.

- Use recycled paper. Most major office paper manufacturers have cost-competitive office paper made from 30 to 50% post-consumer recycled content. Some paper mills such as Boise, Cascades and Wausau manufacture office grade copy papers from 100% post-consumer waste.
- Set up "Used Once" paper bins near all printers and copiers. "Used Once" bins are helpful reminders that the paper should be reused. This paper can be quartered and stapled together into handy scratch pads that are especially popular among conservation-minded employees.
- Feed "Used Once" paper into the default drawer of the network copier. Most internal documents can be printed on "Used Once" paper. By loading it into the default drawer of your lab's network copier, you will consistently cut your office paper costs.

Recycle

Recycling reduces the environmental impact of paper consumption both at the raw material source and in the landfills where it's disposed. According to a 2006 report from the United States Environmental Protection Agency, paper accounts for 34% of all municipal solid waste. Diverting

your company's waste paper from the dumpster to a recycling bin is a major key to reducing this double-fold impact. Furthermore, recycling paper may also reduce your trash removal expenses.

- Set up a company-wide paper recycling program. Check your local phonebook for paper recyclers. Many of these companies couple their services with on-site shredding and document management programs.
- Recycle the cardboard too. Corrugated cardboard is an easily recycled material that occupies substantial dumpster space. Depending on the volume of waste cardboard your organization generates, recycling vendors often provide containers or a bailer to help process this material.

Conservation, like quality, isn't a destination, but a journey. And in today's manufacturing environments, both require effort that is sometimes difficult to cost justify. But the reduction and recycling of paper does in fact benefit our environment, and therefore benefits us directly. Applying the three R's to office paper contributes to a healthier community, and allows us to manufacture products with less waste.

Ray Harkins is the Quality Manager of Mercury Plastics, Inc. in Middlefield, Ohio. He earned in B.S. in Engineering Technology from the University of Akron. Harkins is a Senior Member of ASQ and a certified quality engineer and calibration technician.

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To be the globally recognized champion on principles and applications related to Quality Technologies, Tools, Techniques and Methods.

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To satisfy our membership and other stakeholders by being the most reliable source for leading edge information relating to inspection and test methodology.

Inspection Handbook

The Handbook is on schedule for interested parties to participant as writers of the various chapters. We have received, as of this date, a few submittals but still need authors for several chapters. If you are interested in being a participant in the handbook please submit within three weeks of this newsletter an abstract of the chapter you want to write. Don't worry about the spelling and style at this point; we will work with you on the "cleaning" of the chapter contents at a later date. If you feel the need to add another chapter that the book committee has overlooked please send me the suggested chapter tattle and abstract for committee review.

I would like to thank all the people who have already submitted their abstracts and welcome additional writers. This is a historical movement for our Division and a definite need for the quality assurance initiative worldwide. There will be no other book like it!!

Please send your abstract to:

Dr. E.F. "bud" Gookins

Inspection Handbook Editor