

In the UK, more than 80% of all corrugated cardboard boxes are recycled, giving the corrugated industry the best recycling rate of all packaging materials.

This impressive recycling rate saves an area of board the size of Greater London from landfill every four months.



Corrugated packaging is very flexible when it comes to selecting a waste management option, and there is no need to send it to landfill. Well over three-quarters are already recycled, but it can also be reused, composted or incinerated with energy recovery; although the latter is a lower carbon benefit than recycling.

It is important to remember that the vast majority of the timber from trees goes to construction and furniture making, and that papermakers use the forest thinnings and sawmill waste associated with these industries.

Waste Hierarchy

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has laid out a waste hierarchy, specifying which waste management option should be given priority.

1. Reduce

Manufacturers of corrugated packaging are constantly improving their techniques and technologies to create more efficient packaging products. Part of this is the development of "lightweighting" technologies, used to make boxes stronger whilst using less resources. As a result, box for box, corrugated packaging is both stronger and lighter today than it was 20 years ago.

2. Re-use

Re-using a product to prolong its life is good sense. However, it is not always practical or the best environmental option based on life cycle thinking. In a

number of situations recycling is a better option than re-use. This is recognised within the European Waste Framework Directive.

3. Recycle or Compost

The Waste Strategy for England 2007 requires the re-use, recycling and composting of 60% of household waste by 2020 ⁽¹⁾.

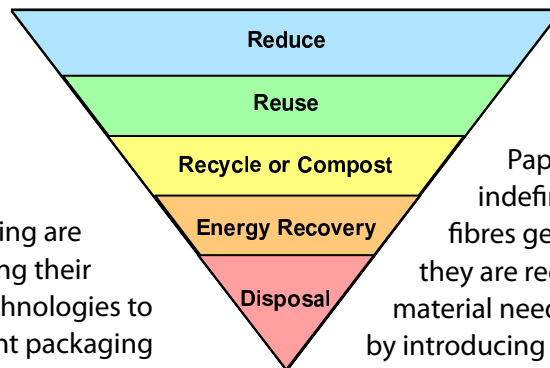
a) Recycle

Not only is recycling beneficial to the environment and to the UK's carbon footprint, but with each box containing 76% recovered material on average, and many containing 100%, it is essential to the UK corrugated industry. Recycling is therefore the preferred waste management option for corrugated packaging, as it ensures that fibres, which

would otherwise be lost, can be reused.

Paper cannot be recycled indefinitely however, as the fibres get weaker each time they are recycled, and so the material needs to be strengthened by introducing new fibres into the mix. These come from higher quality paper products, such as magazines and office papers, where virgin fibre is required to meet the performance criteria of these products.

Recycling is easiest when it is most convenient. Many Councils now collect corrugated cardboard in their kerbside collections. Alternatively, "bring" sites exist in most towns at supermarkets and civic amenity sites, and many people bring their used corrugated



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board to supermarket recycling facilities when doing their weekly shopping. Other papers that may not be desirable in the kerbside collection may also be deposited with the corrugated cardboard.

b) Compost

Where recycling facilities do not exist, corrugated cardboard can be used to provide much needed "brown" waste to your compost heap. Brown waste provides fibre and carbon, and allows air pockets to form in the layers of waste. Air enables anaerobic digestion to take place - a vital part of breaking your garden and food waste down, and turning it into nutritious compost.

Making compost at home is an easy way to create environmentally friendly, peat-free compost. It also helps cut down on other types of waste which you would normally send to landfill, such as vegetable peelings.

For more information on home composting, see the Recycle Now home composting website at: www.recyclenow.com/home_composting/

4. Incinerate with Energy Recovery

Under the EU Landfill Directive, the UK is required to reduce the volume of biodegradable municipal waste it sends to landfill. The Waste Strategy for England 2007 expects 25% of municipal waste to be used for energy recovery by 2020. This means that other ways need to be found to deal with the diverted material that is unsuitable for recycling and composting.

For this reason, incineration of non-recyclable waste with energy recovery is becoming an increasingly popular alternative to landfill.

In 2006, the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) produced a report, entitled Environmental Benefits of Recycling, which provided a comprehensive review of international life cycle analysis (LCA). The report was updated in 2010, and again demonstrated the huge benefits of recycling over both incineration and landfill, concluding that the UK's current recycling of those materials (including paper and board) saves between 10 - 15 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalents each year compared to the current mix of landfill and incineration with energy recovery.



In reality, incineration emissions are now tightly controlled through legislation, however this does not mean that the paper industry is unconcerned about any promotion of incineration above recycling.

The papermaking industry feels it is essential that all recyclable material is recovered prior to incineration, in order to make best possible use of the material. However, industry also accepts that some materials cannot be recycled for quality reasons, and in this instance incineration is preferable to landfill.

5. Dispose (Landfill)

The landfilling of corrugated packaging should be viewed as a last resort. Such a versatile, easily recycled product should be recovered wherever possible, in order to make the most of the resources which went into its production.

Government initiatives and producer responsibility for the disposal of packaging waste

Producer responsibility is a policy concept designed to extend manufacturer's responsibility beyond the sale and use of their products to include disposal at end of life as well. As far as packaging is concerned, there are two aspects to it:

- designing packaging with its eventual disposal in mind
- requiring producers to take some financial responsibility for management and treatment of packaging waste

The UK has a statutory producer responsibility regime for packaging. This places a legal obligation on businesses which make or use packaging (raw materials manufacturers, converters, packer/fillers and sellers) to ensure that a proportion of the packaging they place on the market is recovered and recycled.

The Producer Responsibility (Packaging Waste) Regulation

Under the Packaging Waste Regulations, producers must pay towards the cost of recycling waste packaging by purchasing packaging waste recovery notes (PRNs) from reprocessors or exporters of waste packaging. They are set targets each year which they must meet.

Government recently announced new packaging targets for 2013-17 for a range of materials, but paper and card recycling targets will remain unchanged as the UK is comfortably surpassing previous targets (achieving 81.9% against a target of 60%).

Recycling logos

With recycled products now being demanded by the public, a few companies are cashing in on the public's sympathies by making vague, extravagant or misleading claims. In response to this, several recycling logos were founded. When featured on products, these logos can be a way of verifying that the company's claims are genuine.

Corrugated Recycles – This symbol is used to highlight the excellent environmental credentials of corrugated packaging. Any packaging featuring this symbol is likely to contain a high proportion of recovered material, and be recyclable.



On Pack Recycling Labels – The On-Pack Recycling Label scheme aims to deliver a simpler, UK-wide, consistent, recycling message on both retailer private label and brand-owner packaging to help consumers recycle more

www.recyclenow.com



material. Launched by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) with support from WRAP, the On-Pack Recycling Label scheme is a voluntary scheme administered through a subsidiary company called OPRL Ltd. Retailers, manufacturers and brand owners with packaged products on the market, are encouraged to participate in the scheme.



RecycleNow Swoosh - The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has founded the RecycleNow Swoosh.

This swoosh is used in place of the 'recyclable' mobius loop, below. 75% of local authorities use the RecycleNow Swoosh, and so you may recognise it from recycling bins and collection vehicles.

The Mobius Loop – this comes in two versions:



Recycled Content – This symbol is used only by products that are made from, or contain a percentage of, recycled fibre. The percentage by weight of recycled fibre used appears in the centre of the loop.



Recyclable - This symbol denotes that the product can be recycled after use.

For more information on recycling logos, please see CPI's Environmental Labelling fact sheet, at: www.paper.org.uk.

Where can I get more information?

Confederation of Paper Industries

1 Rivenhall Road
Swindon, SN5 7BD
Tel: 01793 889612
Fax: 01793 878700
Email: cpi@paper.org.uk
Website: www.paper.org.uk

DEFRA

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR
Tel: 08459 33 55 77
Fax: 020 7238 2188
Email: defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.defra.gov.uk

INCPEN - Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment

SoanePoint,
6-8 Market Place
Reading, RG1 2EG
Tel: 0118 925 5991
Fax: 0118 925 5993
Email: info@incpen.org
Website: www.incpen.org

Packaging Federation

1 Warwick Row
London, SW1E 5ER
Tel: 020 7808 7217
Fax: 020 7808 7218
Email: dicksearle@packagingfedn.co.uk
Website: www.packagingfedn.co.uk

¹ Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-archive/environment-food-and-rural-affairs/efra-pn-11-100119/>