

## Best Practice:

### Paperless Office – Smart Use of Paper

Today, many individuals and companies recognize the need to protect our environment by using our natural resources smartly and to recycle whenever possible. However, have you ever considered going paperless?

In today's age of e-mail and digital drawing files, one would think that we could exist without paper, but a look around many building department offices finds that we routinely rely on multiple copiers and printers in our daily operations. And we expect that our clients do the same by requesting and receiving multiple copies of drawings and specifications for concurrent review, re-review, approval and archiving.

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### Recycled Paper

Choosing to use recycled materials in copier and printer paper reduces demand on our forests that are also used to produce many of the materials used in the construction industry that we regulate. The Environmental Paper Network (EPN) <http://www.environmentalpaper.org/> reports that as compared to virgin paper, recycled paper:

- Uses less total energy
- Uses less bleach
- Produces fewer toxic releases
- Saves water
- Reduces waste that otherwise must be land-filled or incinerated

According to EPN, the bottom line is that multiple life-cycle analyses clearly show that recycled paper is better for the environment, even when accounting for transportation. And if this was not enough, recycled paper often costs less than virgin papers, or papers manufactured without recycled content.

### Change the Margins

According to a study done by the Penn State Green Destiny Council, reducing margins to 0.75" on all sides, when compared with the 1 and 1.25-inch default margins provided by Microsoft, results in a total reduction of paper by 4.75%. This means that using these Efficient Margins on a ton of paper saves 19 reams of paper, which saves 1.14 trees. That reported by <http://changethemargins.com/>.

### Double-Sided Copies

While older copiers did not print double-sided documents well, if at all, today's copiers and printers print equally well on one or both sides of a piece of paper.

### Electronic Forms

Provide forms, instructions and other information useful to the public on your website. When a consumer can request a service online, this not only saves on the cost of printing and maintaining the paper, but eliminates a bit of pollution in that the consumer did not drive to the building department to request the service.

## **E-mail Salutation**

A simple message to remind people to consider the environment. We found the following attached to the signature block of an e-mail for the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. It made us think: do we really need to print this document?

"Please consider the environment before printing this email. Thank you."

## **Eliminate or reduce the number of copy machines in your office**

A graphic design company tried unsuccessfully to reduce its paper use for several years. Then one day when its copier stopped working, permanently, they realized that they could do without this machine – and did. The company recognized that it was easy to copy a document by simply pushing a button, whether or not the copy was absolutely necessary for operation of their business.

The company recognized that if necessary, it could scan a hard copy of a document, save it to their network computer drive, and print from this file. They found that most people that used to copy documents for their review were now reviewing the documents in their electronic format. The design company recognized a reduction in overall paper usage by more than 50 percent.