



Standard Guide for Validating Recycled Content in Packaging Paper and Paperboard¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide provides an approach for both the calculation and the substantiation of recycled content of finished packaging paper and paperboard products. A mass balance approach is recommended for use by manufacturers since no physical or chemical test method is currently available to determine absolute recycled content of a finished paper product. Calculations are based on time weighted average flows which are based on furnish component flow rates and consistency. Recommended approaches to the calculations include by batch or by time weighted average for a specific grade or similar grades. It is not recommended that average recycle content be allocated by mathematical apportionment rather than by actual fiber content. That is, if 50% recycled fiber is used over time that is the time weighted average. One cannot use this same data to report 50% of the production is 100% recycled.

1.1.1 Percentage calculations are based on lb/ton or kg/tonne with the time frame constrained by machine and grade (see 10.1.1.1 and 10.1.1.2).

1.1.2 Pulping and recycling yields are not used in these calculations. The calculations of recycled fiber content in the finished product is solely a function of type of fibers in the furnish flows, the volume of flow and the time period considered.

1.2 This guide covers (1) recycled content of packaging paper and paperboard products that contain any amount or kind of recycled fiber; and (2) methods to calculate and substantiate the level(s) of recycled fiber content claimed by an agreement between the buyer and the seller.

1.2.1 This guide may be used with or without modification to calculate or substantiate the recycled content of packaging paper and paperboard products when recovered nonfibrous materials (for example, filler) are a part of the recycled fiber furnish. Limited guidance is provided for appropriate modifications to this guide for the determination of amount of recycled nonfibrous materials in paper products.

1.3 This guide does not recommend either an amount or a kind of recycled fiber or material to use since (1) the amount and kind of recycled content in a packaging paper or paperboard product should be agreed upon between the buyer and the seller, and (2) the calculation and substantiation procedures recommended may be used for any amount or kind of recycled material agreed upon between the buyer and the seller.

1.4 The mass balance calculation method recommended by this guide may or may not comply with applicable federal, state, or local laws for recycled content statements intended to be received by consumers. Limited guidance on content statements is in [Appendix X1](#).

1.5 The following safety hazards caveat pertains only to the test method portion, Section 10, of this guide: *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

- 2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²
D685 Practice for Conditioning Paper and Paper Products for Testing
D996 Terminology of Packaging and Distribution Environments

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Definitions shall be in accordance with Terminology D996 and the *Dictionary of Paper*.³

4. Classification

4.1 The buyer and seller may agree to packaging paper and paperboard product classes and types of their choice, which may be from among the following classes and types:

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ Available from the Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry, P.O. Box 105113, Atlanta, GA 30348.

4.1.1 Classes include, but are not limited to, any of the following packaging paper and paperboard products: folding boxboard, set-up boxboard; linerboard and corrugating medium for use in corrugated containers; tubestock; carrier board, bag paper, and other related packaging paper and paperboard products.

4.1.2 Two types of products are included: those containing no virgin fiber and those containing a mixture of recycled and virgin fiber.

5. Ordering Information

5.1 The buyer and seller of packaging paper and paperboard products with recycled content should agree upon at least the following information:

5.1.1 Class(es) and type(s) of product(s) (see 4.1),

5.1.2 Percent of recycled fiber, by air dry or conditioned weight fiber dry weight, and, if appropriate, recycled material, by air dry or conditioned weight, to be incorporated into a product (see 6.5 and 10.1 through 10.6),

5.1.3 Degree of variation in recycled fiber or material content allowable in shipped product (see 6.2),

5.1.4 Time period during which recycled content is to be calculated (see 10.1.1),

5.1.5 Method of substantiation used to support the agreed-upon recycled content claim for the packaging paper or paperboard product,

5.1.6 Format and frequency of recycled content substantiation and reporting, and

5.1.7 Type and frequency of review by the buyer (see 12.1) of procedures and data used by the seller to monitor compliance with the agreed-upon recycled content of product(s) under contract.

6. Composition

6.1 Recycled content of packaging paper and paperboard products supplied in accordance with this guide should be agreed upon between the buyer and the seller (see 5.1).

6.2 The average recycled content for a packaging paper or paperboard product shipped from the seller to the buyer within a specified time period (see 10.1.1 through 10.1.1.3) should be at least equal to the contracted recycled content or be within a degree of variation (see 6.3) of that content.

6.3 The buyer and the seller may agree to a degree of variation in the recycled content in shipped product from the seller to the buyer when multiple shipments will take place over the contract period; however, any degree of variation for recycled content greater than 10 % is not recommended. In addition, recycled content of a shipment of product that exceeds the degree of variation agreed upon by the buyer and the seller should be reported by the seller to the buyer in an agreed-upon manner.

6.4 Recycled content of packaging products composed of two or more components should be reported as the weighted mean recycled content of the multiple components (see 10.2).

6.5 All measures of recycled content should be on an air dry or conditioned weight basis as specified by the buyer (see 5.1.2).

7. Physical Attributes

7.1 The average value of physical characteristics, workmanship, dimensions, and appearance for any product should meet the requirements agreed upon by the buyer and the seller with reference to appropriate ASTM or standards of other organizations.

8. General Attributes

8.1 Acceptable defect levels and quality levels should be agreed upon between the buyer and the seller. The use of recycled fiber or other recycled material should not restrict the usefulness of the products covered under this guide, nor should it cause a product to not meet all specified requirements agreed upon between the buyer and the seller.

9. Bid Samples

9.1 When requested, the bidder should submit a representative product sample for examination purposes and data to support the claimed recycled content. An explanation should be included of the specific method(s) used to substantiate that content, with indication over what time period the measurements will be made. A separate sample should be submitted for each class and type of packaging paper and paperboard product being bid on, along with supportive data and explanatory information for each. Each sample should be clearly marked with the bidder's name and address, bid number, and manufacturer's name or code number.

10. Measurement Procedure

10.1 Recycled fiber content should be calculated as the ratio of recycled fiber weight to total fiber weight in a given quantity of packaging paper or paperboard product and expressed as a percentage. The basic calculation method is as follows (see Appendix X1 for an example, see 10.4.1 Eq 3 and Eq 4 when mill paper machine broke is used):

$$RF_C, \% = (RF_U \times 100) / (VF_U + RF_U) \quad (1)$$

where:

RF_C = recycled fiber content, %,

RF_U = weight recycled fiber used (for example, kg fiber component per t of final product), and

VF_U = weight virgin fiber used.

10.1.1 The calculation of recycled content should be for a fixed time period agreed upon between the buyer and the seller.

10.1.1.1 It is recommended that a monthly or quarterly time period be used, as appropriate to the duration of the contract and production runs, for monitoring compliance of shipped product with its claimed level of recycled content during the term of the buyer-seller agreement. An alternative time period, however, may be agreed upon between the buyer and the seller.

10.1.1.2 When multiple products of varying recycled content are manufactured within a specified time period on a single paper machine, then the recycled content for a specific product should be calculated based upon those time intervals within that time period during which that specific product was manufactured.

NOTE 1—For example, if a calculation of monthly recycled content in