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Switch to recycled TP (and PT) pays off Gains for the environment come at no extra expense

Mar 4, 2009

By Amy Nordrum

At no extra expense, Ohio University is making a switch that will save more than 77 cubic yards of landfill space, more than 180,000 gallons of water and nearly 450 trees each year. And it all comes down to paper towels and toilet paper.

As soon as the current stock of older products is depleted, the university will switch to 100 percent recycled paper towels and toilet paper in all campus buildings.

The university began purchasing the products from SCA Tissues in early February. The goods are 100 percent recycled from cardboard, office paper and other products. Previously, the university's paper products contained 70 to 80 percent recycled content.

The switch came at the suggestion of Classic Solutions, the distributor that supplies the university's custodial supplies.

"It offered us a better product in terms of sustainability, an opportunity to partner with a good company, and (SCA) was able to match price," Director of Building and Grounds Services Steve Mack said.

The university buys about 30,000 rolls of toilet paper and 13,200 rolls of paper towels each year. With that high volume, the university is able to make a strong statement with its purchases, Campus Recycling Manager Ed Newman said.

"It completes the cycle of not only recycling the material but creating a demand for the recycled product, and Ohio University, as a large buyer, is instrumental in being able to do that," he said.

SCA products also are EcoLogo-certified, meaning they are environmentally friendly based on resources used in the manufacturing process, waste reduction and the impact of the product's lifecycle on air and water quality. SCA has been ranked as one of the most sustainable companies in the world by the World Wildlife Fund and the Ethisphere Institute, an international think-tank focused on corporate social responsibility.

In addition to using recycled toilet paper and paper towels, Ohio University's custodial services also uses green seal certified cleaning products, which are safer for employees and the environment due to low levels of toxicity. The department is also partnering with the Office of Sustainability on the "Get Caught Green Handed Campaign," a campaign that recognizes sustainable practices in the office place.

For more information on green purchasing at Ohio University, visit www.ohio.edu/sustainability/GreenPurchasing2008.htm.

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