

"Plastic packaging that saves trees!"

5 ways in which our air cushion packaging makes environmental sense.

The Pitney Bowes Parcel Shipping Index concluded at the end of 2016 that parcel shipping volume will grow at an annual rate of 5% to 7% through 2018¹. Great news for those involved in the packaging and transport industries of course, but this also brings its own challenges. How do you ensure goods arrive undamaged while taking the environment into consideration? After all, excessive packaging may give better protection, but it means more resources being consumed and larger parcels (and therefore higher fuel consumption).

1. Using only a minimum of packaging

We are acutely aware of this, and tackle the issue in a number of ways. For a start, we offer advice to our customers about optimum packing; helping them determine the minimum amount of packaging required to produce the desired level of protection. This often takes place in our packaging lab, where we carry out 'transit testing' certification based on the International Safe Transit Association (ISTA) norms. This already eliminates the use of unnecessary packaging.

2. Thinner plastic, yet the same level of protection

Another of our focus areas is making smarter use of plastic so as to achieve the same result using less (thinner) material. We use advanced modelling techniques to examine more vulnerable points in our packaging, such as seals. We even send transponders with deliveries in order to precisely measure the forces packaging is subjected to during a journey.

This allows us to work out how to strengthen our cushions so they can be constructed from thinner material. We refer to this as ‘enlightening’; constantly striving to reduce the weight of packaging without compromising its effectiveness.

3. 99% air, 100% reusable, 100% recyclable

Our air cushion packaging only contains a tiny percentage of plastic. 1% to be precise; the other 99% is air. We only use high-quality material so cushions can easily be reused (e.g. for returning a shipment). If, for whatever reason, re-use is not possible then the material can be 100% recycled. We print messaging on our packaging (using only water-based ink so it doesn’t compromise the purity) to encourage this.

We are also continuously searching for viable alternatives to our source materials, such as bioplastics made from vegetable oils or corn starch. At the moment the cost and environmental impact of these materials are too high, but we are monitoring the situation closely.

4. Using 4,5 tons less material than paper packaging, per company per year



In addition, our air cushions generally only require 1/6 the weight of paper to achieve the same results². If a company packs and ships 100,000 boxes a year, the difference between these two methods is approximately 4,5 tons!³ This has an enormous impact in terms of storage and warehouse processing (you need eight times as many palettes of paper as you do of our air cushions), transport and air freight. And saving 4500 kg of paper is equivalent to planting approximately 166 trees annually.

5. Reduce, reuse, recycle

And lastly, all of this fits in with our ‘3R’ philosophy; **reducing** raw material consumption, stimulating **reuse** and facilitating **recycling**. We are the only air cushion manufacturer with a fully-certified (EN 13427)⁴ product; further proof that we are committed to minimising the impact of our packaging.

Through our packaging, solutions we can ensure that the continually growing volume of parcel shipping arrives safely at its destination while actually minimising environmental impact. So the next time you consider how to best protect your shipments in a responsible way, remember: the answer’s in the air!

FP International is a global, total solutions provider and innovator of protective packaging systems. We offer a wide variety of standard and custom solutions, ranging from in-line operations at international distribution fulfilment centres to smart pack stations at start-up companies, web-shops and small businesses. Find out more at: www.fpintl.com

- 1. This analysis was based on 12 major markets, including the U.S., six European countries, Japan, Australia and India, and looked at business-to-business, business-to-consumer, consumer-to-business and consumer-consigned shipments.*
- 2. This comparison depends on many different factors, such as the size of the void, the size of the box, the type of air cushion, the thickness of the cushion, and the type and thickness of paper. The ratio of plastic:paper required is always at least 1:3, but can also be less than 1:7.*
- 3. To properly protect an average product shipped by post you need approximately 9 g of our air cushions per box. Or 54 g of paper. The difference per item is therefore 45 g which, multiplied by 100,000, comes out at 4,5 tons. These figures come from the COMPASS comparative packaging assessment tool, which was originally developed by the Sustainable Packaging Coalition.*
- 4. EN13427: Harmonized standards regarding European Requirements on Packaging and Packaging Waste.*