

# DMA Advice for Protecting the Environment & Your Bottom Line

## – Packaging & Fulfillment: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle –

Environmentally sound order fulfillment minimizes the amount of packaging materials and maximizes the recycled content of materials used, while providing appropriate protection to the merchandise being shipped. The key to effective environmental packaging/fulfillment policies is to reduce, reuse and recycle.

### REDUCE

- Reduce the size of packages to fit the contents.
- Provide a wide selection of carton sizes for your packers and train your packers to use the correct size.
- Share your packaging policies and practices with your vendors.
- Require your vendors to send samples of their intended packaging prior to shipment to allow you the opportunity to review/approve their packaging techniques to ensure that there is no overpacking.

### REUSE

- Get extra mileage out of existing products such as incoming corrugated cartons or other paper and packaging made with post-consumer materials.
- Set aside storage space for reusing incoming packaging materials.

### RECYCLE

- Recycle your own used packaging and encourage your customers to do the same.
- Provide recycling information and resources such as The DMA's "Recycle Please." logo on catalogs, mail pieces, package inserts, etc.
- Use recycled plastics in your products, or recycle plastic.

### Questions you should ask yourself:

- Are you practicing source reduction in your choice of materials?
- Are you reducing the overall amount of packaging you need, and choosing the lightest-weight materials?
- Have you developed packaging guidelines that optimize the ratio between the size of the outgoing shipment and the size of the cartons used?
- Are you reusing your existing and returned material?
- Is the material easily reused by the consumer?
- Is the material made from recycled content with the highest available level of post-consumer material?
- Is the material recyclable?
- Are there facilities available to you and the consumer for recycling packaging materials?
- If the material gets thrown away can it be landfilled safely? Will it take up the smallest amount of space available?
- Do your packaging/packing suppliers provide documented proof of their environmental claims?

- ❑ Are you keeping back orders to a minimum? (Sending two separate packages to the same customer because one item is temporarily out of stock doubles the required packing material.)

**For more information, please visit:**

- ❑ [www.the-dma.org/environment](http://www.the-dma.org/environment) – for the complete DMA Environmental Resource for Direct Marketers.
- ❑ [www.recycleplease.org](http://www.recycleplease.org) – to obtain The DMA’s “Recycle Please” logo.
- ❑ [www.loosefillpackaging.com](http://www.loosefillpackaging.com) or 1-800-828-2214 – the Peanut Hotline. Consumers can call or go online to find the nearest location that accepts plastic loose fill, or packaging peanuts, for reuse.
- ❑ [www.polystyrene.org](http://www.polystyrene.org) – the Polystyrene Packaging Council offers information on polystyrene recycling services and a list of recyclers nationwide.
- ❑ [www.americanplasticscouncil.org](http://www.americanplasticscouncil.org) – the American Plastics Council offers two online tools for businesses seeking recycled plastic products and recycling companies.