



Frequently Asked Questions

Cradle to CradleSM Certification from MBDC

Q: What is Cradle to Cradle Certification?

A: Instead of designing cradle-to-grave products, dumped in landfills at the end of their 'life,' MBDC transforms industry by creating products for cradle-to-cradle cycles whose materials are perpetually circulated in closed loops. Maintaining materials in closed loops maximizes material value without damaging ecosystems. The Silver Certification means that U.S. Postal Service packaging and envelopes have met 39 criteria for human and environmental health characteristics, including recyclability and manufacturing attributes.

Q: What other packaging or mailing companies are C2C certified?

A: The Postal Service is the clear leader in the industry. It is the only packaging, shipping or mailing company in the country to seek and obtain certification.

Q: What products are certified? Will consumers have to pay more for the products?

A: Production using new materials began in May for all Priority Mail and Express Mail envelopes and packages. About 500 million of these items are produced annually. Because consumers can use the same Priority or Express Mail package and envelope to ship internationally or domestically, the Postal Service is spreading more environmentally friendly materials around the world. And, Priority Mail and Express Mail envelopes and packages remain free to customers.

Q: What did the Postal Service pay for certification? How will it affect what consumers pay for services?

A: The Postal Service continues to find innovative ways to help the environment without passing added costs onto customers. Consumers will not see any change in price, service or convenience. The switch to the high quality materials was cost neutral. These are business decisions; fiscally sound and progressive. There was no fee for applying and obtaining Cradle to Cradle Certification, although the Postal Service did invest more than two years in the process – working with 10 vendors and 200 suppliers, and examining more than 250 materials and 1,400 individual ingredients involved in producing packages and envelopes.

Q: What is the environmental impact of the switch?

A: More than 15,000 metric tons of carbon emissions, the gases that cause climate change, will be prevented annually because of the certification. The number of environmentally friendly inks used in production doubled and the number of quality adhesives increased from 3 to 11. Postal Service packages already exceed the highest EPA standards for recyclable materials.

Q: How 'green' is the Postal Service?

A: Environmental work has become a part of the way the Postal Service does business. Some highlights: Thousands of plastic pallets and millions of plastic containers, made of recycled materials that can be recycled again when their useful life is over, are used at processing plants. Stamped envelopes, postal cards, stamp booklet covers and packaging materials are made from 100 percent recycled content. Postal Service facilities in several states run on solar power. USPS operates the largest US civilian vehicle fleet – more than 216,000 vehicles. Almost 36,000 of these vehicles are alternative fuel capable – ethanol, electricity, hybrid technology, biodiesel, propane and hydrogen fuel cells. In FY 2006, the USPS purchased 1.6 million gallons (or equivalent) of alternative fuel.



Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

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The Postal Service has an entire division, environmental policy and program, that examines ways to be more environmentally effective and evaluates if goals are being met. Postmaster General John E. Potter appointed the first executive director of energy initiatives to continue to develop and manage a strategic energy plan that will help the Postal service consume less, spend less, and become a leader in energy management. It's smart business and it's good for business.

Q: When will the program start and how will you let people know about this?

A: Packages and envelopes will be arriving in post offices throughout the summer and also will available online at usps.com/business. Customers will be notified of the new packaging in post offices, online and through press announcements.

Q: Why now? The Postal Service has been using packages and envelopes for years.

A: Postal Service mailing and shipping supplies already had exceeded government requirements, including recycled content standards from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Going beyond existing federal and state agency requirements was a goal in seeking certification. The Postal Service operates a number of existing environmental programs in the areas of recycling, energy conservation, fuel and technology. It is a natural extension of existing work, but not the end to what will be done. This is one more step toward the goal of sustainability. Next steps include certification for other product lines, including printed materials used in post office lobbies.

Q: What are you doing about recycling at post offices? Do you have a recycling program?

A: For Fiscal Year 2005, more than \$8.5 million in revenue was generated nationally through recycling and waste prevention programs. About 1 million tons of wastepaper, cardboard, plastics, cans and other materials are recycled annually through this program.

The Postal Service is a strong supporter and participant in the voluntary WasteWise Program sponsored by EPA. The program challenges organizations to help reduce waste in innovative ways. The Postal Service has won WasteWise Partner of the Year Award, the program's highest honor, six years in a row. Included in the 70 environmental awards received in the past 10 years are 35 White House Closing the Circle Awards. These awards recognize outstanding achievement for programs that make a significant contribution to environmental stewardship.

Q: Are you still using virgin materials?

A: Yes. The more materials are recycled, the less they can hold up as paper. The Postal Service tries to address as much of its materials and in as many aspects as possible. But eventually, virgin materials are still needed.