

# *What Is Extended Producer Responsibility?*

Extended Producer Responsibility is a waste management strategy that is getting a lot of attention. But it's not a new concept. In fact, it's a policy approach that's been implemented in the U.S. for decades. Dive in to learn more about extended producer responsibility.

## What Is Extended Producer Responsibility?

**Extended Producer Responsibility, or EPR, is the concept where brand owners, producers and material manufacturers pay for the end-of-life costs to recycle or dispose of products they put on the market.**

Types of EPR are in place in countries around the world, including in Europe and Canada. It's also in place in the U.S. too.

Fees for producers vary based on the EPR program. Generally, fees help cover:

- Material collection
- Waste disposal
- Technology upgrades
- Educational materials
- Program administration
- Development of recycling end-markets

## Has Extended Producer Responsibility Been Implemented in the U.S. Before?

**Yes, EPR programs are already in place in the U.S. In many instances, the EPR program is for hard-to-recycle materials like batteries, paint, electronics and mattresses.**

Canada and Europe also have similar EPR policies for these types of products as well.

EPR programs can be effective when:

- Products are difficult to process
- Products have low recycling rates
- Healthy end markets do not exist

However, these issues don't apply to paper and paper-based packaging in the U.S.

## Why is Extended Producer Responsibility Getting a Lot of Attention in the U.S.?

EPR is gaining attention in the U.S., mostly at the state level. State EPR legislation varies, but bills are focused on improving the recycling rates of materials commonly found in curbside recycling bins, particularly packaging.

Federal legislation also aimed at improving national recycling rates and recycling infrastructure has been introduced and passed.

## Is Paper and Paper Packaging (Like Cardboard) Recycled?

Yes! **Paper is one of the most widely recycled materials in the U.S.**

Paper recycling rates have continuously increased over recent decades and remain consistently high. **In fact, the paper recycling rate has met or exceeded 63% each year since 2009.**

Recycled paper is used to make cardboard boxes, boxes for food and medicine, tissue products like toilet paper and paper towels, as well as newspapers.

## What Role Does the Paper Industry Play in Extended Producer Responsibility?



The paper industry believes in producer responsibility. We have been working to improve paper recycling for decades. And, paper recycling is a success story.

**Our industry voluntarily set a goal to help improve paper recycling back in the 1990s. The recycling rate has doubled since that time.**

Now, we're working to use even more recycled paper in manufacturing. We've set a goal to increase the use of secondary materials like recycled paper in new paper products to 50% by 2030.

This goal is part of our *Better Practices, Better Planet 2030: Sustainable Products for a Sustainable Future* initiative.

We also have an ownership stake in the recycling system. **Our members own more than 100 materials recovery facilities. That's where your recyclables like cardboard and mail are sorted and processed.**

Our commitment doesn't stop there. The paper industry is investing nearly \$7 billion in manufacturing infrastructure during 2019 to 2025 to continue the best use of recycled paper in our products.

**Contributing to the circular economy and being a responsible producer are the foundation of our industry. We make sustainable, essential products from a renewable resource.**

## Can Extended Producer Responsibility Improve Paper Recycling?

EPR programs can be an effective way to improve recycling for materials with low recycling rates. But paper is already a highly and widely recycled material.

EPR programs could disrupt the successful paper recycling process in place. 94% of Americans have access to a community recycling program for paper products. **According to the EPA, more paper by weight is recovered from municipal solid waste streams for recycling than plastic, glass, steel, and aluminum combined.**

The paper industry is already a responsible producer and has a track record of success. We recycle nearly 75% more paper today than we did in 1990.

Robust and resilient end markets already exist for recycled paper. Meaning, when we recover used paper, we're turning it into new products like boxes and tissue.

**Paper recycling should be used as a roadmap for improving recycling rates without impeding our success.**

## Why is Paper Recycling Successful?

Paper recycling works because:

- Our systems are voluntary and market-driven
- Paper recycling programs are well-developed and widely available
- Millions of people recycle paper every day
- Ongoing recycling education is key to increases in the quantity and quality of paper in the recycling stream
- We continuously invest in recycling technology and infrastructure

# 94%

*of Americans have access to a community recycling program for paper products.*



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### About AF&PA

The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) serves to advance U.S. paper and wood products manufacturers through fact-based public policy and marketplace advocacy. The forest products industry is circular by nature. AF&PA member companies make essential products from renewable and recycle resources, generate renewable bioenergy and are committed to continuous improvement through the industry's sustainability initiative — *Better Practices, Better Planet 2030: Sustainable Products for a Sustainable Future.*