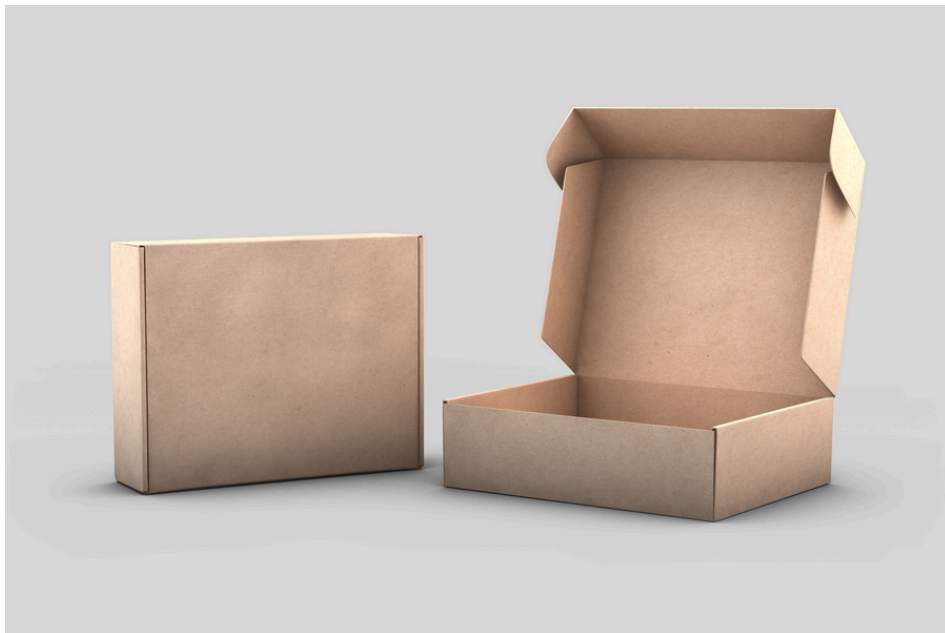




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# How Sustainable Are Corrugated Boxes?



Corrugated boxes—it seems like the world can't live without them. Whether it's moving, shipping a package, or shopping at a store with corrugated displays, most of us encounter corrugated material on a daily basis. But have you ever stopped and wondered how mass production of these essential products impacts the earth? We have!

Corrugated boxes are lightweight, durable, versatile, and recyclable. If they're manufactured with Earth-conscious processes and sourcing standards, they can be an incredibly sustainable packaging option. At President Container Group, we've spent decades and millions of dollars innovating our manufacturing process to be more sustainable, and we continue to find new ways every day to lessen each box's impact on the environment.

In this article, we're breaking down the full lifecycle of the box, from sourcing, manufacturing, distribution and beyond, that contributes to environmental impact and how we've improved our processes to make corrugated packaging more sustainable.

# Lifecycle of Sustainable Corrugated Packaging

## Renewable Material Sourcing

Sustainability starts with raw material sourcing. For corrugated packaging, that's cellulose pulp from forest-based materials. Sustainable forestry practices are critical for reducing environmental impact, social impact (on local communities) and ensuring that we can sustain a healthy tree population for generations to come. Organizations like the [Sustainable Forestry Initiative \(SFI®\)](#) and the [Forest Stewardship Council \(FSC®\)](#) have established guidelines to help companies make smarter sourcing decisions.

At President Container Group, we're proud to say that we're SFI® and FSC® certified. Every fiber in our corrugated boxes comes from responsibly managed forests that provide environmental, social, and economic benefits. We also prioritize sourcing recycled paper. 90% of the paper products we source are made with recycled pulp.

## Green Manufacturing

Manufacturing itself has come a long way (and has become significantly cleaner) in the past 20 years. Green energy and manufacturing initiatives are reshaping production processes to be more efficient and less harmful to the environment and surrounding communities.

We've helped lead the way in corrugated manufacturing innovation by embracing energy-efficient practices, reducing water usage, and enabling recycling at every step of our process:

- **Renewable Energy:** In 2015, we established the largest privately owned solar farm in New York to power our Super Plant. Our 19,020 solar panels on 11 acres of property have a capacity of 2 Megawatts, which produces around 25% of the energy our operations require. Should we ever have a power outage, our plant can run on solar power storage for 3 days.
- **Reduced Power Usage:** Partnering with the New York State Energy Research Department and Development Authority (NYSERDA), we installed about 1,000 energy-efficient and motion-sensored lights helping to reduce energy consumption.
- **Closed-Loop Water System:** We use the latest technology in making starch, which allows us to recycle wastewater during the manufacturing process. We operate on a completely closed-loop system. That means, aside from our restrooms and team break rooms, water doesn't enter or leave our facility for any reason.
- **Recycled Scrap:** A state-of-the-art conveyor system runs below all of our machines, and 100% of scrap paper, plastic, and metal is baled and recycled.

## Sustainable Design

Sustainability does not end with material choice or manufacturing efficiency; it extends into the packaging design. Through thoughtful design, we can reduce the amount of material used without compromising the integrity of the packaging and make eco-friendly decisions when it comes to the type of ink that's used.

This can take shape in many ways. At President Container Group, we work closely with our customers to create custom layouts that make the most out of every corrugated sheet, and ultimately reduce waste. We also use water-based inks, most of which we make in-house. Rather than relying solely on buying water-based inks from outside vendors and shipping them to our facility, we buy pigments and additives (effectively cutting out the water weight from our shipping, reducing the carbon emission and overall environmental footprint of our inks).

## Reducing Carbon Emissions in Logistics

For eCommerce businesses, finding ways to reduce carbon emissions is important. [Over 95%](#) of all products in the U.S. are shipped in corrugated boxes. [About 20% of all e-commerce orders](#)

are returned, 20% of which are due to the product being damaged. Protective packaging design is critical in this aspect, as it ensures products are delivered safely, reducing the need for returns and, consequently, lowering the carbon footprint associated with reverse logistics.

We often work with customers who require boxes that can safely transport their fragile items while being mindful of how much material the boxes use—it's a balance.

## **Full Circle: Reuse and Recycle**

Reusing and recycling are cornerstones of sustainable packaging, and corrugated boxes are among the most recycled items worldwide. In 2022, an estimated [93.6% of all corrugated](#) in the United States was recovered and recycled back into pulp.

Corrugated boxes and other paper products can be recycled several times over, making recycling an important material source and a critical part of our sustainable forestry initiatives. We always encourage our customers (and their customers) to reuse or recycle our boxes when they're no longer in use.

# Packaging that Protects the Planet

At President Container Group, our journey towards sustainability is ongoing. We are continually evaluating and improving our practices to ensure that we remain on the cutting edge of sustainable packaging solutions. Our initiatives are not just about compliance but about leading by example, demonstrating that it is possible to deliver high-quality, effective packaging solutions that are also kind to our planet.

[Learn more about our sustainability initiatives.](#)