

## Extension Tip of the Week April 6, 2009

### Lighten Your Packaging Footprint

We find ourselves in the age of convenience and single servings – and with this a lot of extra energy use, waste, and expense due to the additional packaging needed to support this convenient demand.

With our very hectic schedules the ability to grab a single of your favorite food or resource really simplifies your day. But consider the complications:

- Packaging makes up an average of 30% - 50% of municipal waste. Every time you purchase a single serving, you're also getting a serving of packaging. While some packaging can be recycled (beverage containers), most often it is non-recyclable waste (chip packages, clamshells, Styrofoam, etc.).
- Packaging uses energy and resources and adds to our carbon footprint. Each single serving package requires its own production process energy and raw materials.
- Packaging reduces your disposable income. Convenience is expensive. For example, take a bag of Doritos. A big bag (12.5 oz) regularly sells for ~\$3.99. A single serving bag (2 oz.) costs you ~\$.99. Or how about an ink pen. An average rubber grip disposable pen sells for ~\$1.25. A similar refillable pen will cost a little more ~\$1.30, but can be refilled multiple times for ~\$.71.

So, what can you do? Here's three easy things.

1. Buy in bulk. Buy the big back of chips and break it down into single size packages (that you put into a reusable container). You'll have to buy the reusable container, but you'll easily be able to afford that with the extra money \$2+ you'll save by not buying single.
2. Plan. Think ahead and plan your purchases and your needs. You know there are certain items that you'll need at home and in the office... plan for those and get the most from those purchases. You also know your eating habits, plan for those too. Spend some time packing your meals and snacks so you're not tempted to "buy on the run".
3. BYOB. Plastic bags used to carry purchases out of stores can amount to an incredible amount of packaging waste and energy use. "Bring Your Own (reusable) Bag" when you shop.

Take some time to consider your packaging footprint, at work and at home and how it can be lightened. It can save a lot of green for you and the earth.