

American taste for soft toilet roll 'worse than driving Hummers'

Adapted from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/feb/26/toilet-roll-america>
Suzanne Goldenberg, US environment correspondent guardian.co.uk, 26 February 2009



The tenderness of the delicate American buttock is causing more environmental devastation than the country's love of gas-guzzling cars, fast food or McMansions, according to green campaigners. At fault, they say, is the US public's insistence on extra-soft, quilted and multi-ply products when they use the bathroom.

"This is a product that we use for less than three seconds and the ecological consequences of manufacturing it from trees is enormous," said Allen Hershkowitz, a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defence Council.

"Future generations are going to look at the way we make toilet paper as one of the greatest excesses of our age. Making toilet paper from virgin wood is a lot worse than driving Hummers in terms of global warming pollution."

Making toilet paper has a significant impact because of chemicals used in pulp manufacture and cutting down forests. More than 98% of the toilet roll sold in America comes from virgin forests, said Hershkowitz.

Greenpeace this week launched a cut-out-and-keep ecological ranking of toilet paper products.

"We have this myth in the US that recycled is just so low quality, it's like cardboard and is impossible to use," said Lindsey Allen, the forestry campaigner of Greenpeace.

The New York Times reported a 40% rise in sales of luxury brands of toilet paper in 2008. Paper companies are anxious to keep those percentages up, even as the recession bites. Reuters reported that Kimberly-Clark spent \$25m in its third quarter on advertising to persuade Americans against trusting their bottoms to cheaper brands.

Americans already consume vastly more paper than any other country — about three times more per person than the average European, and 100 times more than the average person in China. Barely a third of the paper products sold in America are from recycled sources — most of it comes from virgin forests.

"I really do think it is overwhelmingly an American **phenomenon**," said Hershkowitz. "People just don't understand that softness equals ecological destruction."

American taste for soft toilet roll 'worse than driving Hummers'

Name _____ Date _____



Read the article and look up any unfamiliar words

1. Decide whether the following statements are fact or opinion:

- a. The tenderness of the delicate American buttock is causing more environmental devastation than the country's love of gas-guzzling cars. FACT/OPINION
- b. Future generations are going to look at the way we make toilet paper as one of the greatest excesses of our age. FACT/OPINION
- c. More than 98% of the toilet roll sold in America comes from virgin forests. FACT/OPINION
- d. Kimberly-Clark spent \$25m in its third quarter on advertising to persuade Americans against trusting their bottoms to cheaper brands. FACT/OPINION
- e. People just don't understand that softness equals ecological destruction. FACT/OPINION

Now answer the following questions.

2. What is the main purpose of this article?
 - To inform readers about claims made by environmental campaigners regarding soft toilet paper use in America.
 - To persuade readers to buy recycled toilet paper.
 - To entertain readers by poking fun at American people's tender bottoms.
 - To explain about the ecological consequences of using quilted toilet paper.
3. Why does making soft toilet paper have such an impact on the environment?
4. What percentage of toilet paper made in the USA has come from virgin forests according to Allen Hershkowitz?

American taste for soft toilet roll 'worse than driving Hummers'



5. According to Greenpeace, what myth about recycled paper stops people from buying it?

6. How do toilet paper brands encourage sales of luxury paper even though we are at the beginning of a recession?

7. There is a spelling mistake in paragraph one. Find it and write the correct spelling here:

8. Some punctuation is missing from paragraph four. Put in the correct punctuation.

9. The best word to replace 'phenomenon' in the last paragraph would be:
 - fact
 - trend
 - happening
 - event

10. Finally, take notes on the article as follows:
 - a. Use a highlighter pen to highlight the main points
 - b. Then write the main points in your own words.
 - c. Finally, sum up the article in just one or two sentences.