

## **World Green Organisation – Paper Towel Survey** **It only takes ten seconds to make a difference in this planet**

Press photos: <https://goo.gl/8fuBPH>

(Hong Kong, 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2016) The World Green Organisation visited nearly 80 shopping malls, commercial buildings, industrial buildings, residential clubhouses, and offices in October and November this year to see how companies, property management companies, and shopping malls would respond to future municipal solid waste charges on paper towel waste. The results from the ‘Paper Towel Survey’ showed that more than 40% of the surveyed companies were willing to reduce the use of paper towels or use hand dryers. However, 60% were reluctant to use less paper towels as a result of potential customer or user complaints.

The previous questionnaire survey jointly conducted with JCI Lion Rock on paper towel usage in urban areas in May pointed out that many people mistakenly believed that paper towels are recyclable despite of hygiene. However, paper towels actually generate more problems after usage.<sup>1</sup> Paper towels is a waste of resources as they are not recyclable, cause environmental damages, and increase pressure on landfills.

### **Paper towel usage situation can still be improved**

In May, many people expressed their willingness to reduce paper towel usage to support environmental protection. In the past six months, World Green Organisation once again partnered with JCI Lion Rock to follow up on this situation. The survey conducted determined where the public visited such as offices, shopping malls, and residential clubhouses. On average, one shopping mall used up to 15,000 sheets of paper towels per day.

Over 90% of toilet facilities in companies and management companies still provided paper towels. 60% of the companies surveyed provided both paper towels and electronic hand dryers. Out of the 90% of respondents that are aware of the MSW charging scheme, only 70% understood the scheme and why it was important. Less than 10% of the companies surveyed actually planned to disable paper towel dispensers. This shows that there is still a lot of work to be done to reduce paper towel usage to help improve the environmental situation.

### **Reducing paper towel usage to help cut costs**

According to the survey, 40% of the companies which planned to install hand dryers decided to do so after considering cost (including price, power consumption, maintenance, etc.). The second biggest factor in

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The toughness of paper towels take 2 – 4 weeks to decompose in the decomposition process which produces methane which accelerates global warming.

deciding to install hand dryers was for health reasons. Nearly 15% of the companies surveyed said that the hand dryers resulted in a reduction in paper towel expenses. Individual companies were able to save more than 80% of their expenses which demonstrates that cutting paper towels could cut costs for companies.

Nearly 30% of the respondents did not intend to only use hand dryers to replace paper towels. 50% of respondents out of that stated that this is because they felt that electronic hand dryers were not convenient. Many also stated that they felt that it was not as hygienic. The hygiene and health issue is still a controversial topic. According to the Mayo Clinic study on the hygiene efficacy of paper towels done in 2000, there is no significant difference in the amount of bacteria in hand towels, paper towels, hot air dryers, and natural air-drying methods. This is why there are already cold air dryers available in the market that is specifically designed to reduce bacterial growth when used to dry hands<sup>2</sup>.

This survey showed that companies and management companies did not improve significantly in the paper towel usage. Research showed that to produce one ton of paper towels, 17 trees and 20,000 gallons of water is needed. This is equivalent to more than 10,000 trees per day, 4 million per year (this is using the previous calculation of paper towel usage; 15,000 sheets per day). If this habit is continued, more and more trees will disappear and create large amounts of sewage among other problems.

### **Hand dryers only take 10 seconds which can help the environment**

By reducing paper towel usage, we can reduce the loads of landfills, the number of trees being cut, and water sources being polluted for the production of paper towels. The use of handkerchief or cold air hand dryers can help moderate the use of paper towels which can have long term benefits for the public and the environment and help save money for companies. We hope that the public and private businesses, and shopping malls will earnestly reduce the use of paper towels.

Dr. William Yu, Chief Executive Officer of the World Green Organisation said “Based on the above investigation, many companies are resisting installing hand dryers in fear of customers complaints and potential hygiene problems. Before building the habit to carry handkerchief, we encourage consumers to reduce paper towel usage to help the environment through if it is less convenient.

Companies and management companies are encouraged to reduce the use of paper towels to improve their toilet facilities. In order to increase the public’s awareness of the environmental consequences of using paper towels, we invited companies and management companies to come together and sign a charter showing their support to ‘reduce the use of paper towels’ for the environment.”

### **Phase 1 “Reduce the Use of Paper Towels Charter”**

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<sup>2</sup> Like the argument against paper towels, these paper towels easily breed bacteria.

The World Green Organisation launched the “Reduce the Use of Paper Towels Charter” (Phase 1). Nearly 50 shopping malls, companies, and management companies participated in the charter. They pledged to reduce the use of paper towels in the next six months by 10% and inform members of the public of the importance of reducing paper towels by sticking stickers in the toilets.

Representatives from the companies attended a briefing and carried out a meaningful ceremony on the launch day. The companies’ logo hung on the Christmas tree symbolises the signing of this charter and the reduction of trees that will be cut as a result of this pledge. It also reflects the benefits on the environment such as decrease in water pollution and waste. WGO will continue to promote this charter and transform Hong Kong into a green city.



Dr. William Yu, Chief Executive Officer of the World Green Organisation with the companies and management companies that attended and participated in this ceremony.



Dr. William Yu, Chief Executive Officer of the World Green Organisation, urged more companies, management companies, and shopping malls to participate in the “Reduce the Use of Paper Towels Charter”.



Dr. William Yu, Chief Executive Officer of World Green Organisation explained and analysed the ‘Paper Towel’ Survey.



Dr. William Yu, Chief Executive Officer of the World Green Organisation along with representatives of the shopping malls in attendance hanging their logo on the Christmas tree as a pledge to reduce paper towel use by 10% in the next six months.

**Organiser : World Green Organisation**



The World Green Organisation (WGO) is an independent non-governmental organisation concerned with environmental conservation and environmentally related livelihood and economic affairs. Through science-based policy research and community projects, the WGO aims to enhance the quality of the environment, promote a greener economy, and improve people's livelihoods. In particular, it will focus on the social concerns of underprivileged groups and on the creation of a green economy to help realise its vision of sustainable development. For more information, please visit <http://www.thewgo.org/>

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**Strategic Partner: JCI Lion Rock**



Established in 1971 as a member of the Junior Chamber International Hong Kong, JCI Lion Rock aims to nurture young people to develop leadership skills and social responsibility through a variety of trainings and work plans. In this process, participants help contribute to the community while improving the quality of their lives that are built with the right values.  
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