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OTC recycles 10,000 pounds of paper and saves trees By Christine Luciano

Nearly nine hundred million trees are cut down each year in America to make paper. It is the number one material that is thrown away. According to the Energy Information Administration, "for every 100 pounds of trash we throw away, 39 pounds is paper." The Fort Hood Operational Test Command (OTC) is making an environmental impact by keeping their recycle bins full of used paper and saving over 96 trees.



Step into any office in OTC and you will find recycle bins for paper, cardboard, and aluminum cans. "Overall the Command at OTC tries to do the right thing and recycle," said Cherise Jones, Support Services Specialist for OTC. Jones coordinated with each responsible directorate within OTC to gather 600 boxes of records that were eligible for destruction. Jones contacted the Fort Hood Recycle Center to learn how to prepare the boxes of paper for recycling. "Our team spent long hours everyday over a couple of months removing any sticky notes, laminated papers, large paper clips, and carbon paper from the 600 boxes of records," Jones said. "In the end we got down to 500 boxes of records that was 98% white paper."

The records were mostly raw data used for operational testing that were no longer needed for current operations and were eligible for destruction. The process requires that some records be held for a period of several months to a few years. "Currently we have over 400 boxes that are current but not eligible for destruction," Jones said. "But eventually these boxes will come to the recycle center as well."

After spending months preparing the boxes for recycling, Jones coordinated with the Fort Hood Recycle Center to come and pick up the 500 boxes. "There was so much paper, that it had filled up our recycle truck, and another POV (personally owned vehicle) had to be used to haul the paper to the recycle center," said Rufus Walker, Recycle Assistant Manager.

When the boxes of paper arrived at the Recycle Center, Jones and her team set up a station around the shredder and spent two days shredding almost 10,000 pounds of paper. "We figured out a good rhythm for shredding that worked, and timed ourselves to averaging about 47 boxes an hour," Jones said.

“Recycling is simply just the right thing to do,” Jones emphasized.

“More than 90 percent of the printing and writing paper made in America is still made from trees,” said Susan Kinsella, Executive Director of Conservatree, a non-profit organization that educates paper buyers on environmental paper purchasing. “The type of paper that has the most environmental impact is office and copy papers. Every ton of recycled paper substituted for non-recycled paper saves 12 trees (newspaper) to 24 trees (office papers) and reduces a significant amount of energy and water that otherwise would be required to make paper from trees.”

“If recycling our boxes is saving 10,000 pounds of paper from going into the landfill, we are going to get rid of it the right way,” Jones said. “Being good stewards of the environment is everybody’s job. It is as easy to put something in the recycle bin as it is to put it in the trash, so you might as well recycle.”

“The recycle center is happy that an organization like OTC took the time to do the right thing and recycle,” Walker said.

The Fort Hood Recycle Center operates on funds raised in recycling paper, cardboard, plastic, compact discs, aluminum cans, and brass. Each year the funds go back to supporting the Soldiers. In October 2006, the Fort Hood Recycle Center gave \$100,000 to the Directorate of Morale, Welfare and Recreation for Soldiers’ use, and also paid for the fireworks for this past summer’s 4th of July Freedom Festival.

“It is important to understand that recycling helps take care of our Soldiers, and support them so that they can have every opportunity to do their jobs,” Jones said.