International Post Corporation

Royal Mail saves estimated 2,000 tones of waste by designing reusable trolley sleeves

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Royal Mail saved 2,000 tonnes of waste last year by replacing single use cardboard trolley sleeves with more durable, reusable versions which last up to four years. The new sleeves, which were fully designed and manufactured in-house, cut waste by 10 per cent last year and helped Royal Mail achieve its target of reducing waste by 25 per cent compared to the 2020/21 base year.

Royal Mail's in-house engineering team was tasked with designing a replacement for the traditional single-use fabric and cardboard trolley inserts used in mail centres and delivery offices, which would be reusable, increase capacity and more compatible with automated machinery.

As well as improving efficiency by increasing capacity of each trolley, the new sleeves – known as 'Yorks' internally – will be used up to 3,000 times over an expected lifespan of four years and are made from fully recyclable corrugated plastic, including 30 per cent recycled material.

Waste management is a key part of Royal Mail's Steps to Zero strategy, which set a goal of achieving Net-Zero by 2040 with a 50% reduction in Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030.

After introducing the new sleeves and other operational changes, Royal Mail met its 2030 target of achieving a 25% reduction in waste volumes seven years early. The company reduced its waste by 27% against its base year of 2020/21. It recycled, reused or diverted 98% of its remaining waste.

Royal Mail has also introduced a reuse programme for pallets and adjusted its mail bag practices by substituting single-use plastic cable ties for reusable 'hook and loop' straps. The company is now looking to maintain and improve its performance by exploring innovative approaches to enhance its recycling. It will focus on efficiencies in its operational products, used to collect, convey and distribute mail.

Zebrina Hanly, Royal Mail's Head of Environment, said: "We have not only met our waste reduction target, but have done so seven years ahead of schedule. This wouldn't have been possible without the innovation from our engineering team as well as the hard work of our posties and wider operational

staff. Our mission isn't over, however, and we're continuing to work hard to maintain our position as the UK's greenest delivery option."

Royal Mail is the UK's greenest delivery option* for letters and parcels.

The company's 'Steps to Zero' environment strategy set a goal of achieving Net-Zero by 2040, with a 50% reduction in Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030. The company already has the lowest emissions per parcel of any UK courier, at 200g, and aims to maintain this position in the long term.

*Based on average gCO2e emissions per parcel delivered by UK parcel operators, as published by Citizens Advice 2023 Parcels League Table.

Source: Royal Mail

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