

# A Greener Office- Styrofoam

Source: The Green Office ([www.thegreenoffice.com](http://www.thegreenoffice.com))

Styrofoam, or polystyrene, engenders a host of environmental and health detriments. It's made from non-renewable fossil fuels, and its production releases the harmful greenhouse gas HCFC-22 into the atmosphere. Heavy exposure to polystyrene is linked to headaches, fatigue, and depression. After use, polystyrene does not biodegrade and is known to choke and clog the digestive systems of animals when improperly disposed of. When burned, polystyrene releases 57 chemical byproducts. Some of these same chemicals can be transferred to food that is stored in Styrofoam containers, especially during microwaving.

## Buying Guide

When buying disposable insulating cups and plates, choose cornstarch based products. They are easily biodegraded, made from a renewable resource, and do not require atmosphere-harming chemicals during production. Another alternative is to consider buying recycled paper cups with insulating recycled-paper sleeves.

Product	Recommendation	Description
Agriculturally-based Styrofoam replacements	Best	Biodegradable, renewable resource, ozone-friendly, maintain insulative properties
Recycled-Paper Products	Good	Biodegradable, renewable resource, ozone-friendly, recycled, but may need additional sleeve for insulation

## Best Practices

Use the following suggestions to curtail Styrofoam use in your office:

- Instead of Styrofoam packing materials, use shredded paper to cushion items for shipping.
- Use recycled paper products instead of Styrofoam when possible.
- Buy cornstarch, or other agriculturally-based, disposable products.

