

So you want FSC?

Philip Chambers

Many companies are being asked to become FSC certified, so that the FSC logo can be printed on the customer's product. Whilst printers can use paper from sustainable resources, the proof of this gives the customer both reassurance and the ability to display their concern about using sustainable natural resources. In many cases, the inability to print this logo has meant that a company has lost the job. Note that you are not allowed to get round this by adding a statement like, "Printed on FSC material".

So what is FSC and how do we go about getting certification?

FSC is a chain of custody system. Every link in the chain must:

1. Be able to know where the paper has come from.
2. Be able to control that paper in his own workplace so that non-FSC paper cannot get introduced.
3. Record paper in and out for those jobs where the FSC logo is printed.
4. Provide correct documentation in the form of despatch notes and invoices so that the next link in the chain can fulfil their step [1].

Once you have got systems to ensure these and have implemented them, you need to be audited and certified by a certification body who have been accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Note that there is another system which is very similar to FSC. This is PEFC which stands for Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes. Many companies gain certification against both standards to give them flexibility.

So what FSC systems do I need?

Materials list

You will need a list of FSC papers and the certificates that go with these papers. This list will be referred to by estimators, and possibly goods inwards personnel, and must include the certificate numbers.

I suggest that you create a table with columns headed supplier, paper name, certificate number, FSC content.

Note that you are allowed to use the FSC logo with paper containing less than 100% FSC paper, providing that your documentation covers this. Therefore, it is essential to know the FSC content (ie % FSC) in the paper.

Estimating

Make sure that the estimating system specifies that any requirement for FSC is reflected in the estimate.

Order receipt

There must be a system that ensures that the need for FSC is specified on the job bag and that FSC paper is specified on the order. If your management information system allows it, you will need to specify the information for the despatch note and invoice. (See "Despatch" for this information.) If your management information system cannot do this, then you are going to have to devise some system that ensures that this is added before despatch. One solution may be to have a large, red FSC stamp for the job bag so that this is immediately apparent to despatch personnel. Note that if you get this wrong, then you have broken the chain and you cannot claim that the paper is FSC certified. At worst, you will have to reprint the job.

Purchasing

The purchasing system must cope with the need to specify only that FSC paper from the materials list on those jobs where FSC paper is required.

Goods receipt.

When the paper is received, the system needs to specify that goods inwards personnel:

- Check that the paper description on the delivery note and purchase order match
- Check that the paper description on the delivery note and on the paper labels match

If there is a mismatch, then the system must cover how the paper is rejected and prevented from being used for the FSC job. Note that certificate numbers may be different. You may be buying paper from a merchant (who has his own certificate number) but the paper may be labelled with the mill's certificate number.

Paper storage and use

Provided you have a robust paper labelling system, it should not be necessary to have a separate FSC paper storage area, though physical separation is a requirement of the PEFC standard.

Your printing system must specify the need for press minders to check that the paper supplied is that specified on the job bag; ideally, they should sign the job bag to this effect. Once printed, it is not so critical keeping track of the paper as it is inherently identifiable.

Beware of keeping track of part-used packs or pallets of FSC paper left over from an FSC job. You need to identify these or decide to no longer claim that this is FSC paper.

Despatch and invoicing

It is essential that the despatch note and invoice specify the following:

- Your certificate number
- FSC claim. This may be that of the paper or the lesser "FSC Mixed" claim (providing that nobody downstream needs to make another claim where they would need to know the precise FSC content, eg 70%.)

BSP-COC-7645 ← Your certificate number
FSC Mixed ← FSC claim your are making for the product

Example of despatch note details

Systems to make sure that it all happens

You need to introduce, implement and be able to prove that you are following these systems:

- Training of people involved in the FSC system
- Auditing the FSC systems. Strictly, this is only a requirement of PEFC, but it makes sense to internally verify that your systems are working.

Outsourcing

Should you outsource any operation on the product, even after it's printed, you will need:

- A system to specify what you will do
- A set of instructions to the outsourcer
- A contract signed by the outsourcer agreeing to follow the instructions.

This may be regarded as being a silly requirement when it comes to printing, but it's in the FSC standard so it must be followed.

FSC administration

This bit can end up being a bit of a headache!

You will need to track what paper you are using as an FSC credit. Whilst your MIS system will do this for individual jobs, it is necessary to also keep a simple table of FSC jobs and the paper used and the claims made.

This may be in the form of a table or spreadsheet as follows:

Job No	Date	Paper	Paper claim	Qty purchased	Qty output	Job claim	FSC Class
18952	1/11/06	Bloggs shiny 80 gsm	FSC mixed sources	10000 SRA2	9000	Mixed sources	322

The important things are that the output quantity cannot exceed the input quantity; it is normally less because of make-ready losses but you cannot use more than you bought. Similarly, you can make a lesser claim for the job than that made for the paper, but not the other way round; you cannot claim that a job is FSC Pure when the paper it is printed on is not..

You will also need to tell the FSC certification body when you are using the FSC logo both on-product and off-product. For on-product, it is easiest if you define some product groups, eg A4 folder and stick with the same logo size, etc.

Finally, you need to be in control of your logo. Unlike other wood products, where the label is stuck on at the end, in printing the logo is added upstream, normally by some other organisation. I suggest that you have a set of FSC rules which you provide should you supply your logo outside your company.

Product groups and classes

This is another annoying requirement. You have to create a log of your product groups and make this publicly available. In the case of printers, we only have one product group "Printed Material". To meet the requirements of the standard, I suggest that you have a statement on your website along the lines of "Certified for FSC products in the product group Printed Material." Alternatively, if your reception area is publicly accessible, you could argue that having certificates displayed there is sufficient to meet the availability requirement.

FSC classes for products are

Product Class	Description
322	Books, brochures and leaflets
323	Journals
325	Pictures, postcards, advertising material
326	Registers, account books, notebooks, stationery

You have to make an annual total of what you have provided in each class.

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About the author



Phil Chambers BSc CMIOSH

Phil completed an apprenticeship with an engineering company, gained a Production Engineering degree and subsequently became a Chartered Engineer. After a career mainly with Moog Controls and Cosworth, Phil joined CRA in Melbourne where he immediately started work on the safety of molten aluminium in addition to his main management role. After a period concentrating on health & safety and environmental management, including molten aluminium operations in Australia, New Zealand and the USA, he returned to the UK in 1996 and formed Strategic Safety Systems Ltd. (SSS)

Phil is a Chartered Health and Safety Practitioner and was a contributor to the second edition of the Printers Guide to Health and Safety (available from HSE Books). Phil has worked with printing companies for over 12 years and has carried out certification support for over 65 printing companies, with certification gained to different combinations of ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, FSC and PEFC. To date, over he has helped 40 companies gain FSC and PEFC certification

In addition to certification support, SSS also provides health & safety and environmental services and computerised systems to manage these and other areas.

Phil is married with four children and lists among his interests, the support of Gloucester Rugby Football Club.