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HOW CHAIN-OF-CUSTODY CERTIFICATION CAN BENEFIT YOUR COMPANY

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Chain-of-Custody (CoC) certification is a process to ensure that virgin wood fiber originates from well-managed forests or controlled and recycled sources. This means that a method is in place to track certified, uncertified and recycled fiber content. Systems are implemented according to each certification organization's (named below) standards to record the possession and transfer of wood fiber from the forest of origin, including controlled sources and recycled wood or fiber, throughout all stages of production, as well as the finished piece. CoC certificate numbers and labels are used to track every stage and progression of the certified material.

CoC certification is required of companies who manufacture, modify or sell wood-based products, such as paper, and want to use the name or trademark of the certification organization. There are three primary CoC organizations for well-managed forests in North America:

- FSC – Forest Stewardship Council <http://www.fscus.org/>
- SFI – Sustainable Forestry Initiative <http://sfiprogram.org/>
- PEFC – Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification <http://www.pefc.org/internet/html/>

How to Attain Chain-of-Custody Certification

The CoC for the three primary organizations for certified forest products is conducted by independent certification groups. Only these accredited third-party certification groups are authorized to issue CoC certificates. Several groups are qualified to perform the initial audit to include all three primary CoC organizations, providing a cost-effective method to acquire three CoC certifications at once. In order to attain CoC certification, companies must complete these following steps:

- Complete the application form and letter of agreement provided by the independent accredited certification group.
- On-site initial audit will be scheduled and conducted by a qualified auditor.
- Records and documentation review by the auditor.
- Report generation of findings is prepared by the auditor and the independent certification group approves based on verifiable and overall conformance to the standard(s).
- CoC certification certificate(s) for each of the three primary CoC organizations are awarded for a five-year duration, but require annual surveillance audits.

Important Components for Managing the Chain-of-Custody Certification Process

- Assign a person the responsibility for managing your company's CoC operations; certified product report generation; employee awareness; documented procedures; and training.
- Track the sourcing and procurement of certified papers; including verification of appropriate sources of supply and record keeping to ensure traceability.
- Monitor inventory controls and receiving verification, have a system in place for identification and separation from non-certified product and internal handling.

- Approve the sales of certified goods; safeguard invoicing and record keeping requirements; mandate authorized logo and label use; and confirm documentation of product claims to customers.

Environmental Benefits of Chain-of-Custody Programs

Being CoC certified is a major benefit to any company, and even more beneficial to the world we all share. Although the certification process is quite detailed, the positive environmental impacts are endless. These positive CoC environmental impacts include, but are not limited to:

- Protecting water, soil, wildlife and endangered forests.
- Prohibiting illegal logging and addressing social issues such as recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples.
- Improved forest productivity by allowing prudent use of EPA approved pesticides.



SGS-SFI-COC-037
www.sfiprogram.org



The mark of responsible forestry
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www.fscus.org



Programme for the Endorsement of
Forest Certification (PEFC)
SGS- PEFC/29-31-17
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[Erin Light](#) is the Chain-of-Custody (CoC) Manager at Unisource Worldwide, Inc. A 14-year veteran in the printing and paper industry, Light has developed extensive knowledge of FSC, SFI and PEFC CoC certification programs. Since November 2006, she has implemented processes to acquire tri-certification for all Unisource, PaperPlus and Websource facilities. Currently, Light develops internal procedures to ensure compliance to certification standards as well as provides CoC resources, tools and information to support Unisource customers.