

Are phone books failing to answer call on recycling?

By Editorial Staff, Resource Recycling

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The Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) has released a report card that indicates the nation's biggest publishers of paper phone directories are not doing enough to support waste diversion.

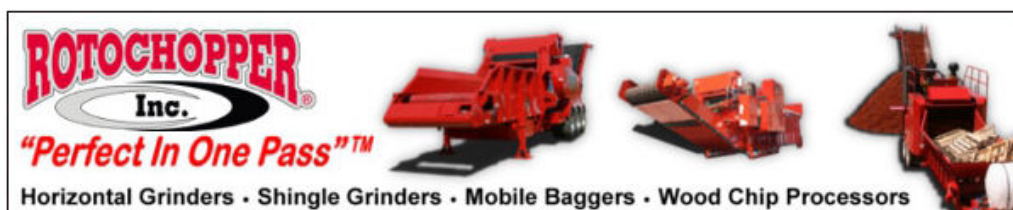
PSI, a group that aims to increase the role of product manufacturers in materials recovery, assessed 15 phone-book companies on their overall sustainability efforts and issued grades in four areas, including "support for recycling."

Just six companies received a grade for their recycling efforts, with the other ten providing insufficient data to accurately generate a mark. None scored higher than a B in the recycling realm and four got marks of C or worse. In its report, PSI says it has begun trying to assess and publicize phone-book sustainability shortcomings because the sector creates high volumes of material that must be handled by local waste streams. According to PSI, in 2009 only 37 percent of phone directories were recycled, and that year the products accounted for 410,000 tons of material sent to landfills and waste-to-energy sites.

"Telephone directory publishers have a responsibility to both educate consumers about phone book recycling and undertake activities that support recycling while reducing the financial burden on local governments," PSI states in the report. "Examples of this include running recycling campaigns, conducting neighborhood sweeps to collect unwanted directories, and maintaining consumer-accessible drop-off locations."

The Berry Company, which is based in Ohio and offers phone directories in many Midwest markets, received the highest recycling grade of the firms judged by PSI. The company earned a B for its efforts to set up collection events and let communities know about those opportunities. PSI said the score would have been higher if more collections were established.

The worst-performing companies, according to PSI, were Hibu/Yellowbook and Dex Media. Both earned the grade of D for not taking "any action to reduce the burden that collecting and recycling its products has on taxpayer-funded recycling programs."



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