

Metroland

Over-packaging needs to be addressed

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By Izabela Jaroszynski

I arrived at work on Thursday to find an interesting package on my desk. It was a six-inch cube cardboard box, light as a feather.

Curious what it could be, I opened it carefully. Inside was crumpled brown paper surrounding yet another box. This one was one of those 'take-out' type boxes that are sometimes used to hold party favours.

Inside that box was a handful of shredded paper and (finally!) a tiny flash drive containing information about Interac's new secure debit system.

A two-inch flash drive wrapped in two boxes and secured by an excess of paper. It could have gotten to me just as securely in a tiny padded envelope. Or the information could have been e-mailed to me -- no packaging required.

It bothers me that companies continue to over-package products. It isn't just marketing plays that come elaborately wrapped, it is also consumer products.

A co-worker tells me about a doll she recently bought for her daughter. Not only were each of the doll's limbs tied with twist-ties, but the hair was secured by rolls of plastic. A child-sized jeep came in not one, but two boxes.

Even ice cream isn't safe from the packaging monster -- a bar bought at a local shop was wrapped in plastic and then stuffed into a cardboard box.

Companies are continually taking steps to become more environmentally-conscious. We celebrate their successes on the pages of this newspaper and in new awards ceremonies like the GreenStar Awards that will take place in Durham on November 1. Many are doing a wonderful job of rethinking old business practices to be gentler on the earth.

So why is it that some companies continue to over-package? Is it because we, as consumers, continue to buy the products? Will anything short of a boycott get the message across that we don't want all of that wrapping?

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