

Thinking Inside the (Corrugated) Box

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Practical, economical, renewable and highly recyclable, corrugated material has stood the test of time for more than a century as a go-to packaging solution in almost every product category.

From food, office supplies and books to clothing, tools and electronics, products travel far and wide to reach us, and for the most part they arrive intact thanks to corrugated containers.

The concept behind this almighty material is pretty straightforward. Take a piece of paper and put some waves in it so that it becomes fluted. Then, glue this fluted paper between two pieces of strong linerboard. Want stronger corrugated paper? Simply add more layers.

Over the decades, corrugated manufacturers have refined their papers, making them stronger and lighter than ever before, not to mention water-resistant. They've also broadened their offering to meet the needs of new products, evolving distribution systems, retailers, manufacturers and consumers. What's more, in light of the role packaging plays in purchase decisions, the demand for tailored corrugate solutions is growing. Be it by colour, design or size, you can customize your order. Combine customization with the aforementioned innovations and you have more choices than you ever thought possible.

Choosing the right containers isn't just about fit. You need to be sure the ones you purchase will keep your goods safe whether in storage, during shipping or on display. You also need to be sure they're up for the task at hand, as tumbling boxes pose a risk to their contents, as well as innocent bystanders.

How can you be sure your corrugated boxes won't fail you?

Great question. The answer lies in the Box Manufacturer's Certificate, or BMC.

All cartons produced in North America must, by law, be stamped with a BMC code, which indicates the results of one of two strength tests. The Mullen Burst Test determines the ability of a box to withstand concentrated internal and external forces. In the early 1990s, the Edge Crush Test, which measures the edgewise compressive strength of corrugated board, became the industry standard.

The results of these tests, incorporated into the BMC code, tell you whether your cartons are right for the job. Truth be told, these codes aren't that easy to understand if you're not in the business, which is why it's always smart to tell your supplier what you plan on using the boxes for. At Ariva, our packaging specialists are always on hand to help you decipher the meaning behind the code, so that you can purchase your cartons with confidence.

Scott Livermore is Director, Packaging & Janitorial Supplies. Scott has been in the paper and packaging business for over twenty years and has been with Ariva for the past five years. Scott has also worked on both the manufacturing (packaging) and distribution sides of the business.