

Nice printing job! Too bad the preprints died in transit.

by Kevin Copeland, *Perfect Pallets, Inc.*

Sloppy shipping practices flout industry packaging standard

As you sip your coffee Sunday morning and dream about buying all those wonderful products advertised in your newspaper flyers, do you ever imagine the voyage those flyers had to take to land on your breakfast table? Advertisers, printers, and newspapers think about it everyday because advertising “preprints” are a critical component of their economic engines and some shipments die on the road.

Talk to any Mailroom Manager at any newspaper and they will tell you horror stories about their customers’ advertising inserts that arrived DOA. “The packaging department is supposed to provide a service to our preprint advertising customers, yet when we receive skids of preprints on damaged or broken pallets our hands are effectively tied,” says Fred Schuerger, Mailroom Manager at the *Erie Times-News*.



When wooden pallets fail in transit, newspapers sometimes have to refuse loads because the preprints cannot be removed from the trailer.

“Poorly packaged skids of preprints cost someone in the supply chain. Whether newspapers eat the costs or pass them on to the trucking company or printer, someone pays for the product spilled in the back of the trailer. When it’s bad enough, printers are reprinting product to make up for those spoiled copies because the skids aren’t shipped packaged to the NAA skid standards. As more advertisers demand targeted distribution of their preprints and a higher level of accountability from newspapers, it has become critical that the product reaches us in good condition. Unfortunately, the reverse seems to happen on occasion.”

In 2002, over 84 billion preprints were inserted into U.S. daily newspapers. Based on simple math, in 2003 newspapers received over 4 million pallets loaded with time-dated advertising material. “When my customers’ preprints are delayed because they are getting reprinted or are stuck on a truck 200 miles away, a huge amount of time and effort is invested in solving a packaging failure that could probably have been avoided if the printer had followed some simple industry packaging standards,” Schuerger states.



Preprints not packaged to the CGATS.7 Standard cost everyone in the supply chain money when the loads fail in transit.

The average palletized load of preprints weighs 1,800 to 2,000 pounds and moves approximately 20,000 preprints per pallet. When a 2,000-pound skid fails due to loose banding or broken end boards, newspapers have a very difficult time getting equipment under the skid to remove it off the truck. “I can’t count the number of times we’ve had to invest considerable money in unnecessary labor to manually gather up all the spilled and damaged preprints on a trailer and repile them onto one of our own skids to get the product off the truck and into our building” says Joe Boris, Packaging Manager at Fox Valley Publications. “We have extremely small windows of opportunity to do our inserting. If the inserts are damaged or the skid has failed in transit, our entire production schedule can get turned upside down.”

In the 1980s, the Research & Engineering Council of the Graphic Arts Industry prepared guidelines for the handling of newspaper inserts. In the early 1990s, the R&E Council approached the ANSI-accredited Committee for Graphic Arts Technologies Standards (CGATS) to develop their guidelines as a consensus American National Standard. During the standardization process, the work was expanded to include printed materials in general, and was completed in 1993 with the issuance of ANSI CGATS.7, Graphic technology — Pallet loading for printed materials. The standard was updated in 2003.

This published industry standard details proven and acceptable guidelines that relate to the stacking, unitizing, protection, and labeling of palletized printed

materials destined for newspapers. It also specifies the functional design of pallets used to transport printed materials and specifications for their loading onto delivery vehicles.

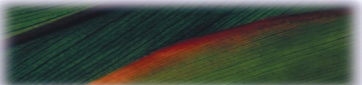


Many printers use plastic returnable pallets because they are durable, reusable, and reduce preprint damage and failed loads caused by wooden skids.

Having printers, newspapers, and advertisers abide by this simple, published ANSI standard can develop increased material-handling efficiency, higher productivity, cost reduction, and better customer service for all parties in this niche distribution loop.

The ANSI standard has an introduction that states, “As environmental considerations continue to grow in importance, increased emphasis is being placed on waste reduction, material reuse, and recycling. Pallet reuse will result in cost savings for printers and their customers by reducing pallet procurement and disposal costs. Utilizing a limited number of pallet sizes will encourage their reuse, promote equipment compatibility, and facilitate their storage and handling. Improved protection of printed products loaded onto pallets will decrease waste caused by damage during transport and its associated costs.”

Advertisers, newspapers, printers, and trucking companies all agree that “pallet quality” is a common link to most failed or damaged loads. “We deliver over 1,000 pallets of advertising inserts a month, and all our reporting points to wooden pallets being the root cause of our customers’ failed load complaints,” say Dell Little of LTL Logistics. “If you put 2,000 lbs on a wooden skid



rated for a 1,000 pound load, you know you're going to have problems." With 20 years of experience delivering advertising inserts, Little believes "the best solution to eliminate load failures is to have more printers use plastic returnable pallets. As plastic milk crates have become the packaging standard in the dairy industry, plastic returnable pallets are fast becoming the reliable standard for delivering advertising inserts in the newspaper industry."

The ANSI CGATS.7 Pallet Loading Standard strongly supports the national returnable packaging program managed by Perfect Pallets Inc. This third party management program supplies commercial retail printers with high quality plastic returnable pallets that have proven to be extremely reliable for delivering inserts to newspapers.




PARADE Magazine requests their national printer use plastic returnable Perfect Pallets to ensure their Sunday Magazine gets delivered in good condition each week.

Bob Sanzo, Distribution Manager for *PARADE* Magazine requests his national printer use plastic returnable pallets each week when packaging his Sunday magazine. "We have a responsibility to ensure our 335 newspaper customers receive *PARADE* Magazine in the best possible condition 52 weeks a year. Plastic returnable Perfect Pallets have virtually eliminated reported load failures and all the headaches and cost associated with packaging failures caused by low-grade wooden skids".

Dave Higgins, Traffic Manager at Vertis Inc. in Manassas, Virginia, used to sustain consistent packaging failures when using wooden pallets, but has resolved that problem by using plastic returnable pallets. "Before we switched to using plastic Perfect Pallets, we had two to three trucks a month return with refused skids from newspapers, which we had to invest the time and labor in restacking. Then we had the cost of delivering the skid for the second time!" Higgins states his plant ships over 5,000 pallets of printed material each month, and they can't afford failed loads. "Since we converted to plastic returnable pallets, we have reduced our transit failure incidents to zero simply because we have never had a plastic Perfect Pallet fail."



Plastic returnable Perfect Pallets keep waste wood out of newspapers and are returned back to printers for reuse. Many newspapers have to pay to get rid of the empty wooden skids, which are destined for landfill.

The industry consensus seems to be strongly supporting printers to more stringently follow this established packaging guideline. The standard was developed with the participation of advertisers, printers, and newspapers. As an ANSI standard, CGATS.7 plays an important role in ISO 9000 certification, contractual agreements and quality control programs between industry partners. 

CGATS.7, the revision of Graphic Technology - Pallet loading for printing materials, is available from NPES for \$15.00 in print or electronic formats. To receive free copies, e-mail service@perfectpallets.com or call 888-270-0790.