

Toshiba announces new printer that uses erasable toner

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Recognizing that the much heralded paperless office hasn't really come about as many expected, Toshiba has taken a new approach to cutting costs, creating a system whereby regular printer paper can be reused by printing on it with toner that can be erased.

The idea is based on the same technology as the FriXion Ball erasable pens; both use heat to cause the ink to lose its color. With the pens, the heat is brought about by friction, with the eraser machine it's done using a heating element.

Unfortunately, the new toner only works with specially made printers, also by [Toshiba](#), of course. The whole thing is a system though, not just a single machine. The first piece of equipment is the special [printer](#) that works like any other except it uses the new erasable ink. Then to erase that ink, already printed on paper is fed into another device called appropriately enough, the eraser. Paper comes out the other end looking almost brand new. Of course, since it doesn't actually remove the toner, prior characters can be read if the paper is tilted just right in the light; thus, the printer and eraser aren't meant for printing sensitive information.

Each piece of paper can be run through five times which could cut down dramatically on paper that is thrown away in offices, potentially saving businesses a lot of money. The eraser is able to detect how many times a page has been sent through and automatically shuttles such un-erasable pages to a separate bin. Also, for those people that like to add hand written comments to their printed documents, if a FriXion ball pen is used, those markings can be erased in the eraser as well.

Also, for those that are worried about losing data on the erased pages, the eraser also has an option that allows for documents to be scanned and saved digitally before erasing.

The initial demo version of the new system only allows for printing in blue, but Toshiba says they are busy working on a way to use other colors as well and to eventually upgrade to full color. Also, thus far, no pricing for the [toner](#) or the system components have yet been announced. Toshiba says that they expect the new systems will be in stores before the end of this year. If customers follow, it's likely other manufacturers will begin making compatible printers to compete with Toshiba's new offering.

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