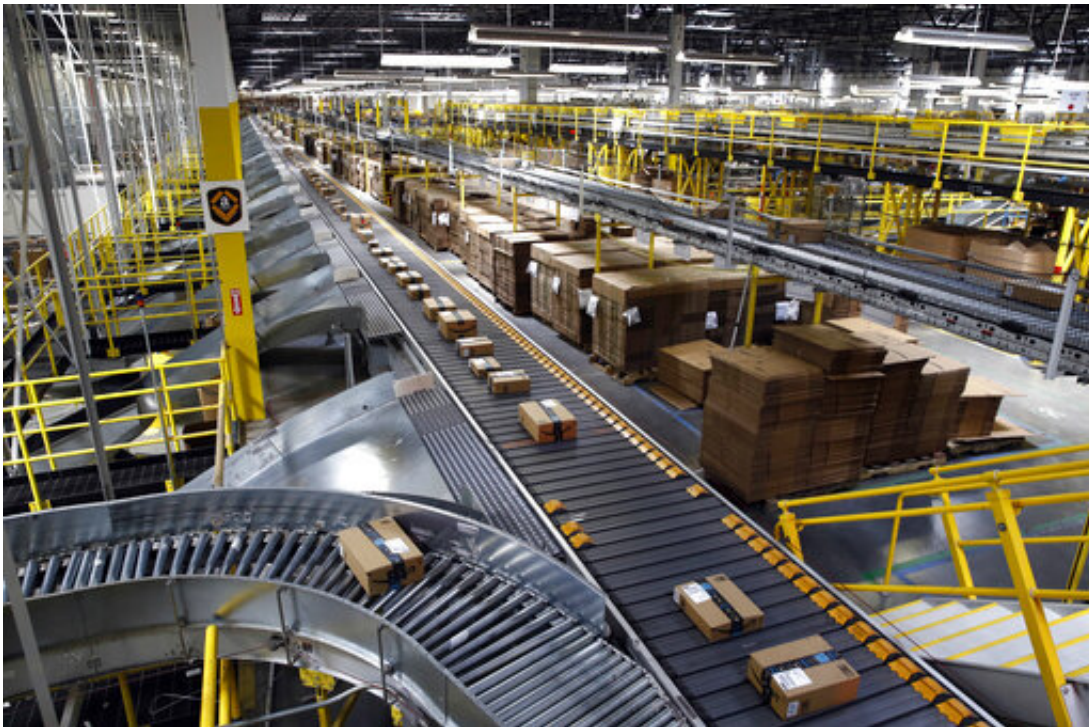


Shop online? Ways to reduce damage to the environment

April 17 2019, by Joseph Pisani



In this Aug. 3, 2017, file photo, packages ride on a conveyor system at an Amazon fulfillment center in Baltimore. Outside of ditching online shopping altogether, there are some small tweaks in how you shop that can cut down on the impact on the environment, such as slowing down shipping times and not filling up the cart with stuff you know you won't keep. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, File)

Toothpaste delivered in two days is convenient, but not so great for the environment. After you click buy, online orders leave warehouses to be

loaded on gas-guzzling jets or trucks. And returns are a problem, too, since the items have to make the trip back to a warehouse.

Outside of ditching online shopping altogether, there are some small tweaks shoppers can make to lower the impact on the environment, such as slowing down shipping times and not filling up the cart with stuff you know you won't keep.

Some online retailers have announced their own initiatives, hoping to please customers worried about online shopping's impact on the planet. Amazon, which hooked us on two-day shipping, says it is using more electric vans for deliveries and working with companies to cut down on their packaging. And Etsy, an online seller of artisanal and vintage goods, is offsetting the emissions from every order by paying for projects such as [wind farms](#) in India and protecting trees in Minnesota.

"It's hard to open the paper these days without seeing news of our changing climate," says Etsy CEO Josh Silverman.

Here's what you can do:

SLOW IT DOWN

Instead of same-day, next-day or two-day delivery, choose slower shipping when you're given the option. This will give shippers more time to plan routes and make sure trucks are filled with packages, which means fewer trucks are needed, reducing the amount of fuel used. You may even get rewarded for being patient: Amazon and Walmart.com, for example, sometimes offer \$1 rewards for picking slower shipping.

AIM FOR ONE BOX

Instead of ordering detergent on Monday and batteries on Wednesday,

hold off and try to order everything together since there's a better chance the order will come in one box. That's not always the case though, since the items may be shipped from different warehouses. If you're an Amazon Prime member, try using the recently launched Amazon Day, which lets you pick a day in the future to get all your orders delivered at the same time.



In this July 17, 2018, file photo, a FedEx employee delivers packages in Miami. Outside of ditching online shopping altogether, there are some small tweaks in how you shop that can cut down on the impact on the environment, such as slowing down shipping times and not filling up the cart with stuff you know you won't keep. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky, File)

SEND TO LOCKER

Ship the package to a central location, like a locker. This lets shippers deliver to one place, instead of having to drive up to individual homes, saving on fuel, says David Closs, a supply chain professor at Michigan State University's Eli Broad College of Business. Amazon has lockers at banks, [grocery stores](#) and other places where orders can be sent. And UPS will let you redirect a package to one of its lockers before it arrives.

Another option: order online and pick up in stores. Walmart, Target, Best Buy and most other big retailers offer it.

RETURN IT YOURSELF

If you're shopping online from a company that has physical stores, bring anything you want to return to the store yourself instead of shipping it back. When you ship back something you don't want, it may be driven to multiple warehouses before it is sold to someone else. Returns at the store typically stay there, says Sharon Cullinane, a logistics professor at the University Of Gothenburg in Sweden.

And be more mindful of what you're buying.

"People over order," says Cullinane. "They buy 10 things and return nine."

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