

The Richlite logo consists of the word "richlite" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters "rich" are white and set against a dark grey rectangular background, while the letters "lite" are dark grey and set against a white background.**Richlite USA**

624 East 15th Street
Tacoma, Washington 98421
888 383 5533 phone
253 383 5536 facsimile
info@richlite.com email
www.richlite.com web

Kimberly Kleman
Editor in Chief
Consumer Reports
101 Truman Ave
Yonkers, NY 10703

Dear Editor:

Consumer Reports for the second year in a row has positioned Richlite paper-composite surfaces in a negative light in the lead of the publication's countertop feature story. The latest rendition in the August 2009 issue states, "Myth: 'Green' countertops are 100% eco-friendly. Reality: we haven't found any countertops that have zero impact on the environment. For example Richlite's paper and resin counters include the paper that comes from certified, managed forests but they're made with petroleum based resin."

While this is technically accurate and something we promote, the way the statement is worded could easily imply that Richlite is making false claims about being "100% Green." This simply is not the case. Richlite Company is extraordinarily sensitive about how it positions its products. We have an open book on our environmental practices and manufacturing processes. Nowhere do we claim to be 100% green. We do take pride in our holistic approach to improving our environmental standing and wholeheartedly believe we are setting an example for the industry. This dedication has led to consistent growth and recognition over the past several years.

When we were contacted by a CR writer over a year ago for a countertop feature story the writer came across as looking for a negative environmental hook rather than a true understanding of the manufacturing process. After the initial interview we followed up with a copy of our carbon footprint analysis which is not mentioned. If any company is considering going green they need to start with their carbon footprint which gives them a platform from which to operate. All the writer seemed to care about was whether or not Richlite used phenolic resin, not why. We are able to achieve a higher quality level than our competitors by using the resin in our materials. We have extensively tested all alternatives and none of them measure up to our standards. In a nutshell we start with FSC-certified and post-consumer waste recycled paper, saturate it, pressurize the material and run the waste through a catalytic converter to heat and dry the product. It's an innovative and environmentally sensitive process.

The waste resin generated during manufacturing is completely consumed during the drying process. This Waste-to-Energy (WE™) technology has enabled us to reduce our natural gas consumption by 81% and emissions are insignificant. Overall it's a much more energy efficient and clean process. Richlite is a clean air manufacturer unlike our direct competitors. Our company, like all product manufacturers, has a long way to go before we can claim to be 100% green. Simply gauging a product's environmental impact based on its recycled content as the CR article states is inaccurate and misleading to your readers. Recycled content is a big step in the right direction and an area that Richlite is taking a leadership position in developing but it's only one piece of the puzzle.

Richlite Company admires CR and agrees that your publication provides a great service to consumers but by restating the Richlite lead paragraph two years in a row – it was eerily similar - the reporting has become lazy. It's surprising considering there are so many other product manufacturers who haven't invested the time or energy in environmental performance than our small, family-owned, American-made surface material company has over the past 65 years.

Our goal is to use minimal resources and generate as little pollution as possible, without compromising quality. This current process, incorporating WE Technology, is the result. We continue relentlessly searching for improvements. When we discover new solutions, we will make sure CR will be among the first to know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elaine Ott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "E" and "O".

Elaine Ott
General Manager
Richlite Company