



Green products' false claims rampant: report

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An organization that puts green product claims to the test has found that 95 per cent of home and family products that make environmental claims are pushing the truth — at least a little.



In its 2010 report, TerraChoice says large box stores stock a better range of genuine green products than green-focused small boutique shops. (Tom Uhlman/Associated Press)

TerraChoice, an environmental marketing agency, calls it "greenwashing" to attach not fully accurate environmental labels or claims to a product.

Among the greenwashing tactics the agency looks for in its survey of Canadian and U.S. 'green' products are claims a product is green based on a narrow set of attributes that ignored other important environmental issues.

For example, a company might claim its paper is green because it comes from a

sustainably harvested forest, but this ignores other environmental issues in the papermaking process.

Greenwashing also includes vague, irrelevant or unproven claims, or the insistence a product is greener than a competitor's, when neither is particularly green, the organization said.

TerraChoice said telling outright lies is the rarest greenwashing tactic.

And while the organization found 95 per cent of products it looked at contained at least one greenwash claim, this is still an improvement over 2007, when only one per cent of products passed the greenwashing test.

In its 2010 report, TerraChoice found a 73 per cent increase from the year before in the number of products making green claims.

Children and baby products were responsible for much of the increase, but greenwashing happened with 100 per cent of the toys and 99.2 per cent of the baby products, the report said.

The report also found that large box stores stocked more green products, with legitimate environmental certification, than green boutique-style shops.