

Cut, fold, send: 3M develops a way to declutter shipping

August 1 2019, by Nancy Cohen



"It's kind of insane that shipping materials haven't evolved much," said Duncan Nielsen in *Dwell*. Nielsen just about nailed what is puzzling

about the way packages are, well, packed.

He said "most items still arrive in [bulky](#) cardboard boxes that are often oversized and awkward, stuffed with wasteful padding that's hard to recycle. And for most people, getting a shipment ready is a time-intensive hassle."

And do not assume online commerce businesses have the answer yet. Andrew Liszewski in *Gizmodo* remarked that online stores "are still occasionally getting caught shipping tiny [items](#) in comically oversized boxes. It's wasteful, it reduces the amount of cargo a truck can carry."

Well, 3M is prepared to make a difference in packing progress. Their idea can impact personal consumers as well as e-commerce managers. In response to the rise of packages being sent out and received in this day online sellers and buyers, 3M has come up with Flex & Seal Shipping Roll a new-day shipping solution.

Their promotional video underscores the advantages of less time spent packing, and less supplies needed.

What you need to bring to the work table: a pair of scissors.

Just prime yourself into gift wrapping mode. This is a roll—Andrew Liszewski in *Gizmodo* described the material as "like a padded shipping envelope that comes deconstructed"—and you prepare to cut off the amount of material you need to fit your item.

Allow for a [border](#) and cut. Wrap by folding over. You go "gray to gray" to make it stay. Press firmly and your package is sealed. No tape. No cardboard box, poly mailers, shipping bags, padded envelopes, extra packaging paper, packing peanuts.

Katharine Schwab, *Fast Company*: it can be customized to wrap any object under 3 pounds—"which 3M says accounts for about 60 percent of all items that are bought online and shipped."

The rolls will be sold in [sizes](#) from 10 feet all the way up to 200 feet.

This shipping "solution" is obviously not without limitations—namely size. It is not recommended for any object that needs to be shipped and is over 3 pounds. Nonetheless, if 60 percent of shipped products weigh less than that, said *Gizmodo*, it could still have a big impact.

If the ease of wrapping and shipping objects off appear convenient for consumers, a simple business analysis indicates how beneficial this might be for e-commerce business people.

Fast Company: "Shipping companies would be able to fit more of this type of package in a single truck, making the [supply chain](#) more efficient and potentially reducing emissions (3M has not done the calculations to discern how much)."

The product consists of three layers. [Schwab](#) described the three that 3M developed: (1) a gray, internal adhesive layer that sticks to itself (2) a middle cushioning layer that serves to protect items during shipping and (3) a tougher outside layer that is tear- and water-resistant.

Scotch said the product is recyclable; the user would remove the label and drop it off at a plastic bag recycling location.

More information: www.scotchbrand.com/3M/en_US/s..._ps-uses/flexandseal/

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