

In the daily routine of a laboratory one of the main processes is to accept and identify the samples.

This means that the package, arrived by courier or directly brought to Catas by the customer, must be unpacked in order to have access to the samples object of the subsequent tests and analysis.

The packages are of many different materials: paper, cardboard, adhesive tapes of various kinds, plastic-bubble foils, polystyrene, filling chips, foam, wood, metal strapping and many others.



Even the samples to be analysed are of different nature, ranging from wood, plastic, through glass, metal, textile, liquid products (paints, adhesives) and so on.

Well, the material to be disposed of, considering packaging and samples, is really a serious commitment for Catas (in 2017 we received more than 50,000 samples). As it is easy to understand the volume of waste leaving our laboratory is therefore very important.

The following is a small table, which contains the weight of each material that we disposed during 2017.

Type of waste	Weight (kg)
Paper	12.490
Mixed packaging	19.580
Solvents	180
Paints	520
Wood and derivatives	74.930

### Why did we write this article?

Well, some days ago I received a package containing a 300 x 50 x 20 mm steel table. This was wrapped in a first layer of paper, once wrapped in a second layer of paper, once wrapped on a bubble plastic foil which in turn had been closed with multiple rounds of shrink-wrap film. Moreover, everything was placed in a cardboard box filled with other plastic material to avoid movement due to the empty space. The total weight of the packaging materials was 700 grams.

It is not the first time that such a situation happens to me, let's say that in principle one package of three could be prepared using much less packaging material.

Another significant aspect concerns the disposal of samples once the tests have been completed. Generally, in our quotations alongside the list of tests to be carried out the dimensions and the number of specimens necessary to perform the analyses are also specified.

And this is the second crucial point.

More than half of the packages we receive contains much more of the material necessary for the tests. An evident example is the following: we recently received a 1 meter x 0.5 meter panel from which we obtained three specimens with dimensions 100 x 100 mm. In practice, for the required test, only the 6% of the material received was used.

We are all sensitive to the environment and we are concerned about climate change, the consequent increasingly frequent natural disasters, the melting of sea and land ice, the rise in the average temperature of the planet, the pollution of water and soil. We also know that this situation fundamentally derives from our behaviour both in our working activity and daily life. Catas has always been sensitive to environmental issues and to the sustainability of all production processes. Consequently, we would like to share with our customers one of the most important messages of the days we are living: **SAVE THE WORLD!**

Surely, we cannot solve all the problems related to pollution with this article but, in any case, we ask our customers to help us do something in favour of the environment trying to reduce the amount of waste, which represents very often a useless, environmental but also economic cost.

### **Then what can we do in practice?**

First of all, we ask you to use the packaging materials sparingly. There are materials that in a single layer protect from impacts also of a severe nature. We could prefer 100% recyclable materials and try to recycle the already used packaging. As far as the samples are concerned, we can try to respect the dimensions and the number of specimens specified in the quotations, eventually asking for the assistance from our technicians. In any case, it will be the responsibility of the technician who has taken in charge the samples to consider the possible need for additional material.

**Life is a great gift, let's give a better future to future generations.**

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