

PACKET & TIMES

Green or green washing? You decide

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Turn on the television and you will see more and more commercials advertising "green" products.

While becoming eco-friendly is exactly what we want manufacturers of consumer products to become, it is left to the consumer to determine if the products in the advertisements are, in fact, green.

Consumers are demanding green products and some companies are quickly responding to the trend.

While many companies are making legitimate eco-friendly changes to their policies, practices and products, a large number of companies are simply changing their advertisements and product labels in order to look green. This misrepresentation is called greenwashing.

Next time you're at the grocery store, take a walk down the aisle with the cleaning products. Many brands have recently changed their product labels to include pictures of trees and use vague terms such as all natural.

Some companies have gone so far as to change the names of their products to include words such as green or eco. The ingredients on the label, however, are often far from green.

In order to help prevent greenwashing in the United States, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is a watchdog that provides companies with guidelines for their environmental claims. Unfortunately, the guidelines are not enforceable, but are mere suggestions that companies can volunteer to follow. The bulk of our cleaning products are imported from the U.S. where there is little protection from greenwashing.