

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Buying Recycled-Content Products

BUYING RECYCLED PRODUCTS

Purchasing recycled content products creates markets for materials recovered from municipal and corporate recycling programs, which fosters sustainability and conserves natural resources and energy. In addition, purchasing recycled products promotes their contin-

ued manufacture and completes the recycling loop.

This component of the WasteWise program helps to close the recycling loop by encouraging the manufacture and purchase of products containing recycled content, thus providing demand for recycled materials.

WasteWise partners commit to purchasing products with pre-consumer or postconsumer recycled content in lieu of products manufactured from virgin materials. If a partner is already buying recycled products, it also has the option of

“ Buy-ing Re-cy’ -cled v. ”

Purchasing products manufactured with recycled content.

purchasing products with an increased percentage of pre-consumer or postconsumer recycled content. Manufacturers have the option of increasing the percentage of postconsumer content in products they manufacture.

chase recycled products. Work with your suppliers to purchase recycled content products that meet your needs and specifications. When considering any new product, it is advisable to obtain samples and, if necessary, test the products on your equipment and with your end users.

“ Man-u-fac’ -tur-ing Re-cy’ -cled v. ”

Manufacturing new products using recovered materials instead of virgin materials.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO BUYING RECYCLED

Performance

In general, recycled-content products perform as well as their virgin counterparts, and in many cases the two are indistinguishable. In some instances, they perform better. You do not need to compromise on quality to pur-

Cost

The cost-competitiveness of recovered materials and products is highly variable and dependent on supply and demand forces and the specific product or materials. The price of products, whether virgin or recycled, is affected by many variables, including:

- Availability and costs of material feedstocks



“ Re-cov’ -ered Ma-ter-i-als n. ”

Material and byproducts that have been recovered or diverted from solid waste. Does not include those materials and byproducts generated from and commonly reused within an original manufacturing process.

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Buying Recycled-Content Products

- Energy costs
- Distributor mark-up
- Transportation charges
- Quantity of the item ordered
- Whether the product is a common stock item or requires a special order
- Geographical location

As more organizations demand recycled content products, availability of such products should increase and prices should decrease.

STARTING OR IMPROVING A BUY RECYCLED PROGRAM

There are five steps companies and organizations should follow to implement an effective buy recycled program.

1. **Develop a policy on buying recycled products.** Resources are available below to help develop a corporate policy statement to promote the purchase of recycled-content products. You may also contact the WasteWise Helpline for additional examples.
2. **Form a committee to develop the program.** Be sure to include staff from different



“ Pre-con ‘-su-mer Ma-ter-i-als n. ”

Materials recovered for recycling prior to use by the consumer, excluding materials and by-products generated from and commonly reused within an original manufacturing process.

departments to help purchasers and users understand each other's needs and constraints.

3. **Conduct an assessment of the products that your organization buys.** This assessment will identify currently purchased products that have recycled content and products that are not currently purchased with recycled content, but could be.

4. **Examine your contract specifications to ensure that they do not unnecessarily hinder the purchase of recycled products.** Some contracts require more stringent product specifications than are actually necessary. Reviewing and revising contracts can encourage suppliers to provide recycled content products.

Quick Reference Products Available with Recycled Content

A wide variety of products are available with recycled content. Here are just a few examples:

- Bags
- Bicycle racks
- Binders
- Boxes
- Building supplies
- Carpeting
- Ceiling panels
- Clothing
- Containers and crates
- Fences and fence posts
- Furniture
- Insulation
- Office supplies
- Oil
- Outdoor benches and tables
- Packaging
- Paper and paperboard products
- Playground equipment
- Posts
- Retread tires
- Road building materials
- Signs
- Wastebaskets and recycling bins

“ Post-con ‘-su-mer Ma-ter-i-als n. ”

Materials that have served their intended use as consumer items and have been recovered or diverted from solid waste for recycling.

5. **Determine the availability of recycled products that meet your specifications in your area.** Contact your current suppliers to find out what products are available and inform him/her that you are interested in procuring these types of products. If your current supplier does not supply recycled-content products, consult the resources below.

WORKING WITH VENDORS TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF BUY RECYCLED PURCHASING

Remind your vendors on a routine basis that your company has committed to buying recycled products. In addition to product suppliers, companies can ask other service contractors, such as printers, janitorial

service providers, and maintenance contractors to use recycled products.

EDUCATING EMPLOYEES ABOUT BUY RECYCLED PURCHASING

Promote the program internally through employee newsletters, routine training, or e-mail. Employee education is necessary to help your employees understand your WasteWise commitments and how they can help ensure success. Educated employees can offer suggestions to improve your program and help you purchase quality recycled

content products. Employee satisfaction with the products you purchase is key to program success.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE BUY RECYCLED PROGRAM

To effectively evaluate the success of the buy recycled program, collect data, such as the product/material purchased, current percent recycled content, previous percent recycled content, amount purchased, and amount spent. This data collection will allow you to make changes to the program as necessary.

“ Re-cy'-cled Con-tent' n. ”

The portion of a product, by weight or volume, that is composed of preconsumer and/or postconsumer recovered materials.

Additional Information Available from EPA

U.S. EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG) program is part of EPA's continuing effort to promote the use of materials recovered from solid waste. The CPG Web site includes EPA's list of designated products and accompanying recycled-content recommendations. The Web site can be found at www.epa.gov/cpg/products.htm.

U.S. EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program (EPP) encourages and assists federal agencies in purchasing environmentally preferable products and services. The EPP Database has environmental information on products and services the federal government buys. The database also includes contract language, specifications, and policies created and used by federal and state governments and others to buy environmentally preferable products and services. The EPP Web site can be found at www.epa.gov/epp.