

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing for Hospitals

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Health Care Without Harm



The Mission of Health Care Without Harm

- To transform the health care industry so it is no longer a source of environmental harm by eliminating pollution in health care practices without compromising safety or care.



What is EPP?

- Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) is the act of purchasing products/services whose environmental impacts have been considered and found to be less damaging to the environment and human health when compared to competing products/services.
- Consideration of the environmental impacts during each stage of a product's life cycle.

Why EPP?

Purchasing is the Key

Purchasing departments are the central point for nearly every product or service procured for the hospital. This makes it an effective point to apply actions to improve environmental impact. It is at this stage of money transfer and contract development that vendors can best be influenced.



Benefits of EPP

- significantly improve impact on the overall quality of the environment

reduce costs due to lower overhead, avoided waste disposal, liability costs or occupational health costs

provide healthier environment for patients, staff

Leverage positive publicity for institution

Why is it less costly to make improvement at the point of purchase?

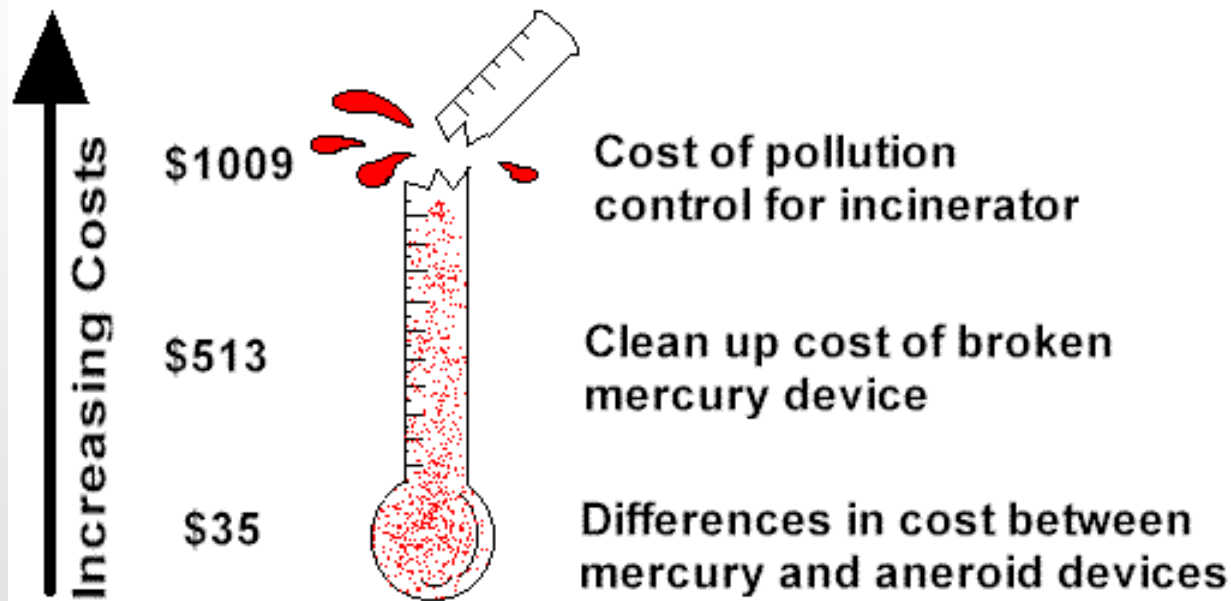


- Correcting a problem close to its source is less costly than taking action downstream. This is what EPP is all about. If the environmental impact can be addressed as early as possible, overall costs will ultimately be lower than pollution abatement later on.

Consider a mercury thermometer:

- If one buys a mercury-free thermometer, the cost of preventing mercury from being introduced to the environment is merely the cost of the thermometer.
- But, if a mercury thermometer is purchased and it breaks, the cost now includes the hazardous material clean-up. If the mercury thermometer is placed in the trash - the cost of preventing mercury from entering the environment includes pollution prevention equipment on the incinerator. At each step, the cost multiplies rapidly.

How Costs Increase the Further Downstream a Problem is Addressed



Reference: C. Galligan, SHP, using data from Mercury Elimination and Reduction Challenge (MERC), "Mercury in the Health Care Sector: The Cost of Alternative Products", November, 1996, pp 14-24

What are the characteristics of an Environmentally Preferable Product?

- Less Toxic (mercury-free)
- Fewer Allergens (latex-free)
- Less Packaging (buy in bulk)
- Polyvinyl Chloride -free
- Recycled content (paper)
- Reusable (mattresses)
- Energy Efficient (appliances)



Purchasing Policy Development

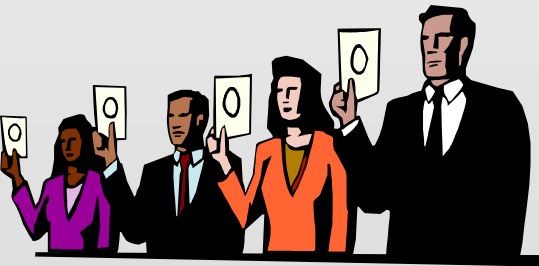
- Request support for EPP goals from top management in the form of policy statement, Request for Proposal (RFP) language, job descriptions, or other support.
- Develop policies and procedures to ensure the implementation of the environmentally preferable purchasing practices.

Purchasing Policy

**Purchasing
Policy affirms
commitment to:
Conservation
Waste Reduction
Recycling
Reuse
Waste Elimination**

Setting Up the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Team

- An EPP team is comprised of hospital professionals from different areas working together to foster a new purchasing culture. This team coordinates its activities with the facility-wide environmental team and the product review committee. The leader of the team should be someone whose administrative responsibilities include ensuring that the EPP Project is fully implemented.



Members of the EPP Team might include



- Central Services
- Clinical Staff: Nursing, Medicine, Surgery
- Communication/Public Relations
- Environmental (Ecology) Team
- Environmental Services
- Facilities Operations (Physical plant, operations, security)
- Financial Services (Accounting)
- Food Services
- Group Purchasing Organization (GPO)
- Infection Control
- Laboratory services
- Materials Management (purchasing, contracting and distribution services)
- Risk/Safety Management
- Waste Management / Housekeeping



Determining Goals of the EPP Team

- Consult with facility environmental team to determine where EPP may help the institution fulfill the institution's main environmental goals.
- Determine what concerns or burning environmental issues a hospital already has. Tackling an existing problem, such as mercury spills, environmental violations, or occupational health problems often guarantees support at all levels.

- In setting goals, examine available resources (see handouts) that can help you implement actions to achieve your goals.
- Decide on environmentally preferable purchasing goals that are specific, measurable, and to be completed in a set time period.

Examples of Measurable Goals

- Increase purchase of recyclables or reusables 30% by the next fiscal year.
- Reduce packaging waste or total solid waste 20% in 12 months.
- Reduce energy or water use 10% every six months for 5 years.
- Reduce purchase of products that become hazardous waste by 10% in next contract.
- Reduce purchase of mercury-containing products 80% by next year.

Investigate various methods of implementing an EPP program:

Creating a Preferred Vendor Program

Creating Lists of Preferred Products or
Chemicals to Avoid

Working with a GPO (Group Purchasing
Organization)

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) HOW TO" Do EPP in Hospitals"

a step-by-step guide for piloting a purchasing project – on your handout.



You can make a difference!

- There is a direct link between healing the individual and healing the planet.
- By carefully selecting goods and services, healthcare organizations can significantly impact the overall quality and health of the environment.