



Green Purchasing Guidelines: Quick Tips

Managers and purchasing agents can take a number of steps to practice waste prevention. This list of ideas was approved by professional procurement officers and is intended to help you jump start your waste prevention efforts and save money too.

Review your existing purchasing policies to assure they do not exclude buying goods with recycled content or products designed to be reused or recycled. Remove discriminatory standards that prevent purchasers from buying perfectly acceptable used or recycled products.

Modify policies to promote procurement of products that:

- Are designed to last (e.g. have good warranties and repair services).
- Have interchangeable parts so they are easy to repair.
- Can be easily reused or recycled.
- Are made from recycled materials.
- Do not contain toxic materials.
- Have minimal packaging, if any.

Show your commitment to using resources wisely by stating in request for proposals that your organization expects suppliers to participate in waste prevention and recycling. Ask vendors to identify products that promote waste prevention and recycling.

Policies That Encourage Waste Prevention

- Perform life cycle cost analysis that includes an assessment of a product's maintenance, energy, water use and disposal costs.
- Allow a price preference for durable, reusable, repairable, and recycled products. A price preference is a way to recognize that some virgin materials receive tax breaks and other subsidies that drive down the prices of products. Consider using cost savings from waste reduction activities to pay for more expensive, but less wasteful products.
- An alternative to price preferences is to use "set-asides" that require a certain portion of purchases for a given commodity be satisfied with products meeting waste reduction standards.
- Consider centralized purchasing through one department or person. It makes it easier to apply waste reduction purchasing policies.
- Make each department accountable for the supplies they use.

Below are a few ways to reduce waste through purchasing. Think about what will work for your organization and brainstorm new ideas:

- Re-evaluate items purchased. Are they really necessary?
- Purchase refillable or reusable products (e.g. refillable pens and pencils, cloth towels and rags, mugs, flatware, dishes, air filters).
- Conduct a pre-purchase review to consider alternatives to disposable and single-use products.
- Purchase the lightest, smallest durable product that will complete the task. Bigger is not necessarily better.
- Practice "just-in-time supply" to avoid over purchasing and spoilage.
- Purchase products that don't need batteries or use solar energy (e.g. manual pencil sharpeners, solar powered calculators).
- Select nontoxic products. Read labels. Look for products that do not require special handling, ventilation or have warnings.
- Choose concentrated cleaning solutions in bulk form. These give you more product for less packaging. Dispense liquid solutions in pump spray bottles rather than aerosol containers.
- Purchase products without packaging, with less packaging, or reusable packaging. Ask suppliers not to over-package orders. (You may have to keep asking over and over!)
- Ask vendors to take back packaging. In some cases they may be able to reuse it. Alternatively, save and reuse packaging materials. Offer excess packaging materials to firms that can use them.
- Purchase copiers and printers that make two-sided copies reliably. Maintain machines on a regular basis to reduce jams.
- Research alternative technologies that can prevent waste (e.g. modem cards, digital duplicators, folder/sealers).
- Purchase rebuilt or refilled toner cartridges. These generally are much cheaper than new ones. Check your warranty and contact several vendors because quality varies.
- Negotiate longer, more comprehensive warranties and service contracts for equipment. Maintain equipment to maximize its life.
- Educate employees about waste prevention through purchasing. Purchasing agents base orders on employee requests. Employees need to know what to ask for.
- Try to repair, refurbish, or rebuild before buying new (e.g. furniture). Purchase quality used or remanufactured products instead of new.
- Contact the Recycling Council of BC Materials Exchange (mex@rcbc.bc.ca) to advertise or find low cost or free used materials. Categories cover construction, containers, durables (e.g. furniture, office supplies), electronics, glass, metal, organics, paint, pallets, paper, plastic, rubber, textiles, wood, and miscellaneous.

Want More Info?

- Visit **Urban Impact** on the web at www.urbanimpact.com or call **604.273.0089**.
- Or visit the **Recycling Council of BC** www.rcbc.bc.ca (732-9352) REC-YCLE.