

Environmentally Preferable Nonpaper Office Products in Alameda County

If you purchase office supplies, you can find many products that are environmentally preferable. These products will have less of an impact on the environment and human health than competing products. For instance, you can help close the recycling loop and create demand for the materials collected for recycling by buying products made from postconsumer recycled paper or plastic.

You can purchase products which are recyclable, rechargeable, remanufactured, reusable and/or less toxic.

Lead by example — buy environmentally preferable office products such as:

- ❖ Binders made without polyvinyl chloride (PVC)
- ❖ Recycled plastic envelopes
- ❖ Recycled paper file folders
- ❖ Rechargeable batteries
- ❖ Recycled content office recycling and waste containers
- ❖ Remanufactured toner cartridges

Examples of Environmental Attributes

Recycled Content – Look for products which contain the highest percentage of postconsumer content. Postconsumer material was collected from business and residential recycling programs and used to make a new product. Purchasing recycled content products closes the loop and supports recycling. It also reduces the impact on greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy and material consumption.¹

Remanufactured – Consider products which have been refurbished without substantial change to their original form. Remanufactured or refurbished products reduce waste going to landfill. Examples include toner cartridges, office equipment, and office furniture.

Made without PVC – Consider alternatives to polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastics, which are chlorinated compounds that release dioxin as a by-product of their manufacture. Dioxin is a known carcinogen.

Less Toxic – Many cleaning products on the market contain harmful chemicals. To know if a product is a safer alternative, consider products certified by a reputable third party organization. Examples include Green Seal <www.greenseal.org/> and EcoLogo <www.ecologo.org/en>.

¹ EPA's ReCon Tool calculates greenhouse gas emission reductions from using recycled materials, http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/waste/calculators/ReCon_home.html

Product-Specific Environmental Attributes for Nonpaper Office Products

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends recycled content levels to look for when purchasing nonpaper office products. They are described in the Comprehensive Procurement Guideline (CPG) at www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/tools/cpg.

The EPA offers ranges of recycled content that reflect actual market conditions. *Buyers are encouraged to purchase as high in the range as practical.*

To identify other environmental attributes, there are several organizations which have recommended, specified and/or certified products for attributes such as toxicity, air pollutants, reusability, and more. Green Seal is a non-profit third party certifier that has established recommendations and specifications for many products and services ranging from facility operations to office products. INFORM is another respected organization which has recommended environmental attributes when shopping for office supplies.

From these and other resources, StopWaste.Org has created an online tool to identify environmental criteria in many product categories, including nonpaper office supplies. The *Guidelines for Buying Environmentally Preferable Products* can be found at www.stopwaste.org/epp. Below is a list of the nonpaper office supplies from the Guidelines with suggested environmental criteria from EPA, Green Seal, and INFORM.

TABLE A. – Environmental Purchasing Criteria for Nonpaper Office Supplies

Product/Category	Suggested Environmental Attributes	Environmental Standard/ Guideline
Batteries	Purchase rechargeable batteries (where applicable), longer-lasting; request suppliers take-back spent batteries for recycling.	INFORM
Battery Rechargers	Purchase rechargers that can recharge several types of batteries.	INFORM
Binders - Cardboard	100% postconsumer content. At a minimum paper bleached without elemental chlorine, but preferably paper that is free of both elemental chlorine and chlorine derivatives or unbleached.	Green Seal
Binders - Paper Covered	90% total recycled content with at least 75% post-consumer. At a minimum paper bleached without elemental chlorine, but preferably paper that is free of both elemental chlorine and chlorine derivatives or unbleached.	Green Seal
Binders - Plastic Covered Paperboard	Plastic at least 25% total recycled content, paperboard at least 90% total recycled content, with 75% postconsumer. At a minimum paper bleached without elemental chlorine, but preferably paper that is free of both elemental chlorine and chlorine derivatives or unbleached.	Green Seal

Binders - Solid Plastic	HDPE: 90% postconsumer PE: 30-50% postconsumer PET: 100% postconsumer Misc Plastics: 80% postconsumer	EPA CPG
Clipboards	50% postconsumer; paper bleached without elemental chlorine; preferably without chlorine derivatives or unbleached (GS); HDPE: 90% postconsumer, PS: 50% postconsumer, Misc Plastics: 45% postconsumer (CPG).	Green Seal EPA CPG
Compact Discs - CDs	Recycle old CDs.	Green Seal
Correction Fluid	Water-based, non-toxic, ozone-safe.	Green Seal
Deskside Recycling and Waste Containers	Plastic: 20-100% postconsumer Corrugated: 25-50% postconsumer Solid Fiber Boxes: 40% postconsumer Industrial Paperboard: 40-80% postconsumer	EPA CPG
Diskettes - Floppy Disks	Recycled; recycle old disks.	Green Seal
Highlighters and Markers	Water-based, certified AP non-toxic, conforming to ASTM D-4236; low odor for dry erase.	Green Seal
Labels	30% postconsumer	Green Seal
Paper Clips	Consider metal or plastic clips instead of PVC-coated clips.	
Pens and Pencils	Choose refillable; if single use, look for 100% total recycled content with 50% postconsumer content.	Green Seal
Plastic Clip Portfolios (HDPE)	90% postconsumer	EPA CPG
Plastic Desktop Accessories (polystyrene) including desk organizers, sorters, trays; memo, note and pencil holders	25-80% postconsumer Consider PVC-free alternatives.	EPA CPG
Plastic Envelopes	25% postconsumer	EPA CPG
Plastic Presentation Folders (HDPE)	90% postconsumer	EPA CPG
Plastic Trash Bags	10-100% postconsumer	EPA CPG
Printer Ribbons	Procure printer ribbon reinking or reloading services or purchase reinked or reloaded printer ribbons.	EPA CPG
Report Covers	Consider PVC-free alternatives (such as polypropylene or pressboard).	
Sheet Protectors	Consider PVC-free alternatives (such as polypropylene).	
Toner Cartridges	All cartridges tested by remanufacturer, parts removed from spent cartridges recycled, recycled content in replacement parts.	Green Seal
Transparencies	25% postconsumer	Green Seal

Trash Bags

Plastic trash bag manufacturers selling trash bags in California must meet either one of the following:

- ❖ Contain at least 10% postconsumer recycled plastic content in all the regulated bags, or
- ❖ Contain at least 30% postconsumer recycled plastic by weight of the material used in all of its plastic products for sale in California.



Wholesalers are required to certify the names of the trash bag manufacturers from which they purchase plastic trash bags.

The California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) posts a list of compliant and noncompliant manufacturers. Manufacturers and wholesalers must also be certified annually by CalRecycle before State of California agencies and departments can purchase from them.

For more information, see www.calrecycle.ca.gov/buyrecycled/trashbags

Include in your specifications for trash bags that suppliers (if you order or purchase directly) or your janitorial service (if they order or purchase) meet or exceed these California requirements for postconsumer recycled content while meeting your performance, cost and availability standards.

Office Recycling and Trash Containers

Indoor containers for trash or recyclables are a common purchasing need. The table in the **Appendix** lists a sampling of product and purchasing information for indoor containers made with recycled content. Product information is supplied by the manufacturers and is not verified. Exercise sound judgment and research products for your specific application.



Purchasing Checklist

Work with your office products supplier and consider the following items during the purchasing process:

- ✓ Ask for products which meet or exceed the recycled content guidelines by the U.S. EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Program (as shown in Table A above).
- ✓ Request products with the environmental attributes listed in StopWaste.Org's *Guidelines for Buying Environmentally Preferable Products* (see examples in Table A above).
- ✓ Ask for PVC-free product alternatives. PVC (polyvinyl chloride) is not easily recycled, and its production releases dioxin, a known carcinogen. Recycled plastic, not vinyl, or fiber binders are possible alternatives.
- ✓ Consider products with low odor or that contain low volatile organic compounds (VOCs) compared with alternatives. Low odor dry erase markers are an example.
- ✓ If you have a contract or purchase order with your supplier, request periodic reports to track purchases of environmentally preferable products.

- ✓ Request products that are labeled with their environmental attributes in the online and printed catalogs you receive from your supplier.
- ✓ Evaluate opportunities to consolidate purchases and frequency of deliveries as a means to reduce packaging waste and transportation impact.

The City of Livermore received a customized recycled products catalog from Office Depot. Many office suppliers can create individualized catalogs or a “Green” office products catalog.

The City of Fremont asks for specially-priced recycled content items in their contracts with product suppliers.

King County, WA bids remanufactured toner cartridges separately from the office supplies contract, and all departments use them successfully saving the County thousands of dollars each year.

Sample Specifications and Purchasing Guides

- ❖ **StopWaste’s Guidelines for Buying Environmentally Preferable Products** includes a list of environmentally preferable office supplies and relevant standards or guidelines for each product, www.stopwaste.org/epp.
- ❖ **The U.S. EPA Database of Environmental Information for Products and Services** includes not only contract language and specifications, but also environmental standards and guidelines, lists of vendors and product brands, and other useful sources of information for buying environmentally preferable products and services: yosemite1.epa.gov/oppt/eppstand2.nsf.
- ❖ More information can be found from the EPA's web page on **Environmentally Preferable Purchasing**: www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp
- ❖ **EPA’s Comprehensive Procurement Guideline** program helps agencies and businesses “close the loop” by buying recycled products. The EPA published recycled content recommendations for eight categories of products, including one for Nonpaper Office Products: www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/tools/cpg/products.

Steps for Success

Changing to new products and purchasing practices can take time. Businesses and government agencies that have successfully changed to buying more environmentally friendly products have found that *including those who use the products in the decision-making process and starting with a pilot project*, helped make it easier.



The purchasing officer at Alameda County set up a pilot project with one of the County's office supply companies. For nine months, the supplier sent samples of recycled content or other environmentally preferable products along with a newsletter and the monthly invoice. The newsletter and the company's catalog highlighted the recycled content items that were often offered at special or reduced prices.

The staff receiving the mailings were also the buyers making the purchases. Purchases of these products almost doubled, increasing the County's commitment to environmentally preferable purchasing and taking advantage of specially priced items.

When you consider environmental attributes in purchasing decisions, you are helping save money, creating a safer and healthier environment and workplace, driving the market to support production of less harmful products and closing the recycling loop by buying products made from the office papers collected from recycling programs!

More Resources

There are many resources available to help identify environmentally preferable products and their performance, see sample bids and specifications, and read case studies of successful programs.

- ❖ **Stopwaste.Org** offers technical assistance and grant funding for applicable environmentally preferable product purchasing. See the *“Buying Recycled & Environmentally Friendly Products”* page in the Free Resources section of the Agency's website www.stopwaste.org/partnership/ for an annotated list of resources and links to other environmental purchasing websites and documents.
- ❖ Contact **Rachel Balsley** at rbalsley@stopwaste.org for information about the StopWaste Partnership for technical assistance and funding for Alameda County businesses. See also www.stopwaste.org/partnership/
- ❖ Contact **Debra Kaufman** at dkaufman@stopwaste.org or **Rachel Balsley** at rbalsley@stopwaste.org for information about environmental purchasing technical and financial assistance to local governments in Alameda County.
- ❖ Contact the **Alameda County Recycling Hotline**, toll-free at **1-877-STOPWASTE (786-7927)** for information about recycling and source reduction opportunities in Alameda County.

Disclaimer

The information provided in this Fact Sheet should be considered by public agency and business purchasers who are interested in buying environmentally preferable products. It is provided as a public service by StopWaste.Org in an attempt to provide environmental benefits and reduce costs. The information on products listed is supplied by the manufacturers. Listing in this Fact Sheet is not a recommendation or an endorsement. This Fact Sheet is not a substitute for the exercise of sound judgment in particular circumstances and is not intended as recommendations for particular products or processes. This Fact Sheet was last updated in April 2010 by Kies Strategies and EPE Consulting, on behalf of StopWaste.Org.

Appendix – Recycled Content Office Recycling and Trash Container Suppliers

This table lists a sampling of suppliers and purchasing information for indoor office recycling, composting and trash containers made with recycled content. Product information is supplied by the manufacturers and is not verified. Exercise sound judgment and research products for your specific application.

The listings are not comprehensive. Many businesses not listed below may carry recycled products. Please refer to your local yellow pages or contact the manufacturers for local distributors near you.

VENDOR NAME	WEB ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	LOCATION	INDOOR SYSTEMS	DESKSIDE BINS	MANUFACTURER	COMMENTS
The Bag Connection “Bagit System”	www.bagitsystem.com	(800) 622-2448	Oregon	YES	NO	YES	Reusable bag systems using recycled plastic frame supports
Busch Systems	www.buschsystems.com www.recyclingcontainer.com	(800) 565-9931	Ontario	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of recycled content container sizes and colors
CleanSource	www.cleansource.com	(408) 954-1234	California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
Cole Supply	www.colesupply.com	(800) 762-2653	California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of recycling and composting containers - check for those with recycled content
Continental Commercial Products	www.continentalcommercialproducts.com	(800) 325-1051	Missouri	YES	YES	YES	Continental commercial products - deskside bins and select central containers have recycled content
The Fibrex Group	www.fibrexgroup.com	(800) 346-4458	Virginia	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of recycled content containers for individual and central stations
Grainger	www.grainger.com	(888) 361-8649	California branch	YES	YES	NO	Comprehensive variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
Midpoint International	www.midpoint-int.com	(888) 646-4246	Ontario	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of recycled content container styles, sizes and colors

VENDOR NAME	WEB ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	LOCATION	INDOOR SYSTEMS	DESKSIDE BINS	MANUFACTURER	COMMENTS
Norseman Environmental Products	www.norsemanplastics.com/sub/environmental.htm	(888) 675-2878	Kansas	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of containers made with recycled plastics
Recy-CAL Supply	www.recy-cal.com	(800) 927-3873	California	YES	YES	NO	Comprehensive variety of recycling and trash containers - check for those with recycled content
Recycling Products, Inc.	www.recyclingproducts.com	(800) 875-1735	Massachusetts	YES	YES	NO	Rubbermaid commercial products - deskside bins and select central containers have recycled content
Rehrig Pacific Company	www.rehrigpacific.com	(800) 421-6244	California	YES	NO	YES	Can accommodate custom image designs; recycled content available up to 100%
Rescue Earth Recycling	www.rescueearth.com	(800) 275-0460	California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of recycling containers - check for those with recycled content
Resourceful Bag & Tag Company	www.bagandtag.com www.clearstreamrecycler.com	(800) 872-8241	Illinois	YES	NO	YES	ClearStream system for special events uses recycled content plastic bags; recycled content square bins for offices
Rubbermaid Commercial Products	www.rcpworksmarter.com	(800) 347-9800	Virginia	YES	YES	YES	Rubbermaid commercial products - deskside bins and select central containers have recycled content
Santora Sales - "Continental, Rubbermaid, Safeco, Impact"	NA	(415) 282-3131	California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of recycling and trash containers - check for those with recycled content
Starline Supply Company	www.starlinesupply.com	(510) 893-7572	California	YES	YES	NO	Select Rubbermaid and Continental commercial containers with recycled content
T.M. Fitzgerald & Associates	www.tmfitzgerald.com	(610) 853-2008	Pennsylvania	YES	NO	YES	Single can container 20-32 gallons; can accommodate custom image designs
Tulip Corporation	www.tulipcorp.com/waste.htm	(414) 263-3120	Wisconsin	YES	YES	YES	Can accommodate custom bin designs with recycled content
Uline	www.uline.com	(800) 295-5510	California branch	YES	YES	NO	Rubbermaid commercial products - deskside bins and select central containers have recycled content

VENDOR NAME	WEB ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	LOCATION	INDOOR SYSTEMS	DESKSIDE BINS	MANU-FACTURER	COMMENTS
Waste Wise Products	www.wastewiseproducts.com	(416) 497-7395	Ontario	YES	YES	NO	Recycled plastic lumber roll-out and stationary multi-stream containers
Waxie Sanitary Supply	www.waxie.com	(925) 245-0618	California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content