

Environmentally Preferable Nonpaper Office Products in Alameda County

If you purchase office supplies, you can help close the recycling loop and create demand for the materials we collect for recycling.

Lead by example — buy recycled content office products such as:

- ◆ Binders
- ◆ Plastic envelopes
- ◆ File folders
- ◆ Desktop accessories
- ◆ Office recycling and waste containers
- ◆ Remanufactured toner cartridges
- ◆ Trash bags

Some of these products also have other environmental attributes like being non-toxic or easy to recycle or reuse after the first use.

Nonpaper Office Products Containing Recovered Materials

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

Further, the EPA created a set of green purchasing criteria for office supplies which meet or exceed the EPA CPG and include additional guidelines covering other product environmental attributes such as process chlorine free, rechargeable, non-toxic, and non-ozone depleting substance, for example. The criteria have been adapted for specific nonpaper office products and are shown in the table below. The complete criteria for all types of office products can be found in Appendix A of the Buying Green Online Report, now available at www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/buying_green_online.pdf.

EPA's Recommended Environmental Attributes for Nonpaper Office Products	
Nonpaper Office Products	Standard Environmental Attributes Thresholds
Office Recycling Containers and Waste Receptacles*	
Plastic	20-100% postconsumer
Paper	Corrugated: 25-50% postconsumer recycled content 25-50% total recycled content Solid Fiber Boxes: 40% postconsumer recycled content Industrial Paperboard: 40-80% postconsumer recycled content 100% total recycled content
Plastic Trash Bags	10-100% postconsumer recycled content

Plastic Desktop Accessories (polystyrene) including desk organizers, sorters, trays, and memo, note, and pencil holders	25-80% postconsumer recycled content
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.
Paper-Covered Paperboard	90% total recycled content, with at least 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.
Pressboard or Cardboard	100% postconsumer recycled content. At a minimum, paper bleached without elemental chlorine, but preferably paper that is free of both elemental chlorine and chlorine derivatives or unbleached.
Solid Plastic	HDPE: 90% postconsumer recycled content/90% total recycled content PE: 30-50% postconsumer recycled content/30-50% total recycled content PET: 100% postconsumer recycled content/100% total recycled content Miscellaneous Plastics: 80% postconsumer recycled content/80% total recycled content
Inkjet and Toner Cartridges	Return used toner cartridges for remanufacturing and reuse. Purchase cartridges tested by remanufacturer, with parts removed from spent cartridges recycled, and recycled content in replacement parts.
Printer Ribbons	Procure printer ribbon reinking or reloading services or procure reinked or reloaded printer ribbons.
Plastic Envelopes	25% postconsumer recycled content/25-35% total recycled content
Plastic Clipboards	HDPE: 90% postconsumer recycled content/90% total recycled content PS: 50% postconsumer recycled content /50% total recycled content Miscellaneous Plastics: 15% postconsumer recycled content /15-80% total recycled content
Plastic File Folders (HDPE)	90% postconsumer recycled content /90% total recycled content
Plastic Clip Portfolios (HDPE)	90% postconsumer recycled content /90% total recycled content
Plastic Presentation Folders (HDPE)	90% postconsumer recycled content /90% total recycled content
Labels	30% postconsumer recycled content/50% total recycled content
Transparencies	25% postconsumer recycled content/50% total recycled content
Batteries	Purchase rechargeable batteries where applicable, long-lasting, product takeback for rechargeable batteries bought, exploration of nonrechargeable batteries bought.
Battery Rechargers	Purchase chargers that can recharge several types of batteries.
Correction Fluid	Purchase non-ozone depleting, water-based, non-toxic.
Writing Instruments	
Pens and Pencils	100% total recycled content, with 60% postconsumer recycled content
Highlighters and Markers	Purchase water-based, certified AP non-toxic, conforming with ASTM D-4236; purchase low odor for dry erase.
Diskettes - Floppy Disks	Recycled, and recycle old disks.
Compact Discs - CDs	Recycle old CDs.

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 Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) posts a list of compliant and noncompliant manufacturers. Manufacturers and wholesalers must also be certified annually by the CIWMB before State of California agencies and departments can purchase from them. For more information, see www.ciwmb.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.



Affordable and More Effective - A Case Study

Plastic Envelopes (Tyvek ®)	U.S. Postal Service (USPS) & U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used in heavy-duty, security-related, and other specialized mailing applications by the express mail, banking, legal, and other industries. • Lightweight, tear-resistant, durable, and water-resistant. • Made from very fine high-density polyethylene fibers, including recycled plastic milk and water jugs. 	<p>The USPS has been using Tyvek ® envelopes with a minimum of 25% postconsumer high-density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic ever since the product became available. In a typical year, USPS spends more than \$20 million on 120 million Tyvek ® envelopes nationwide, using them primarily for express mail and priority mail. USPS staff credit the reliability, superior strength, and lightweight properties of Tyvek ® for its success in the USPS mail distribution network.</p> <p>The GSA also cites the envelopes' strength and weight as reasons for their annual use of almost 2 million envelopes nationwide at a purchasing cost of more than \$400,000.</p>

Product and Source Information

- ◆ Work with your current office products supplier and ask for the recommended percentages of recycled content in the products you buy.
- ◆ Browse office supply catalogs and mark those products with recycled content.
- ◆ Search websites of your typical manufacturers and distributors to identify recycled content product lines they may carry.

The City of Livermore received their very own customized recycled products catalog from Office Depot. Office Depot can do it for others for a fee.

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

Sample Specifications and Purchasing Guides

- ◆ 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 a series of fact sheets for buying industry specific products, including one for Nonpaper Office Products: www.epa.gov/cpg/factshts.htm.
- ◆ **The U.S. EPA Buying Green Online: Greening Government E-Procurement of Office Supplies** was compiled for federal agencies and others working to green their organization's purchases. It includes not only product-specific green purchasing criteria in Appendix A of the Report, but also helpful information on others' experiences in choosing green products, tracking purchases, training employees, and outreach to customers: www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/buying_green_online.pdf
- ◆ Green Seal's **Choose Green Report: Office Supplies** is one of a series of Choose Green Reports that provide recommendations of environmentally preferable products and give environmental criteria, rationales, the product recommendations, and sources for the recommended products: www.greenseal.org/cgrs/OfficeSupplies_finalCE.pdf
- ◆ **INFORM's Purchasing for Pollution Prevention Project** is designed to help local, state and federal governments purchase safer alternatives to products containing persistent, bioaccumulative toxic chemicals such as mercury, lead and dioxins. They work to identify, evaluate and specify less toxic alternatives: www.informinc.org/p3_00.php

Steps for Success

Changing to new products and purchasing practices can take time. Businesses and government agencies who 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, 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 recycled content products and their performance, see sample bids and specifications, and read case studies of successful programs.

- ◆ **The Alameda County Waste Management Authority and Recycling Board** offers technical assistance and grant funding for applicable recycled content product purchasing. Click on **“Buying Recycled & Environmentally Friendly Products”** at the Agency's website www.stopwaste.org for an annotated list of resources and links to other environmental purchasing websites and documents.
- ◆ Contact **Rachel Balsley** at rbalsley@stopwaste.org or **Rory Bakke** at rbakke@stopwaste.org for information about the StopWa\$te 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 the Alameda County Waste Management Authority and Recycling Board 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 September 2004 by Kies Strategies and Beth Eckl, environmental consultant, on behalf of the Alameda County Waste Management Authority and Recycling Board.

Appendix – Recycled Content Office Recycling and Trash Container Supplies

This table lists a sampling of suppliers and purchasing information for indoor office recycling 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
August Supply	www.augustsupply.com	(650) 697-1187	California	YES	YES	NO	Rubbermaid commercial products.
The Bag Connection	www.bagitsystem.com	(800) 622-2448	Oregon	YES	YES	YES	"Bagit System" - Reusable bag systems using wire frame supports.
Consolidated Plastic Company	www.consolidatedplastics.com	(800) 362-1000	Ohio	YES	YES	NO	Rubbermaid commercial products.
The Fibrex Group	www.fibrexgroup.com	(800) 346-4458	Virginia	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of recycling and trash containers.
Grainger	www.grainger.com	(888) 361-8649	California branch	YES	YES	NO	Rubbermaid commercial products.
Midpoint International	www.midpoint-int.com	(888) 646-4246	Ontario	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of recycling containers; labels in French and Spanish.
Recy-CAL Supply Company	www.recy-cal.com	(800) 927-3873	California	YES	YES	NO	Comprehensive variety of recycling and trash containers.
Recycling Products	www.recyclingproducts.com	(800) 875-1735	Massachusetts	YES	YES	NO	Rubbermaid commercial products.
Rehrig Pacific Company	www.rehrigpacific.com	(800) 421-6244	California	YES	NO	YES	Can accommodate custom image designs.
Rescue Earth Recycling	www.rescueearth.com	(800) 275-0460	California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of recycling containers.
Santora Sales		(415) 282-3131	California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of recycling and trash containers, including Continental, Rubbermaid, Safco, and Impact products.
SCL AI-Plastics Ltd.	www.sclai.com	(800) 777-0979	Ontario	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of recycling containers.
Tulip Corporation	www.tulipproducts.com	(626) 968-0573	California	YES	YES	YES	Can accommodate custom bin designs.