

Environmentally Preferable Nonpaper Office Products for Alameda County





Environmentally Preferable Nonpaper Office Products in Alameda County

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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)
- Non-toxic highlighters and markers
- Recycled plastic desktop accessories
- Rechargeable batteries
- Recycled content office recycling, organics and garbage containers
- Remanufactured toner cartridges

1. 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.
- **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 \(www.greenseal.org\)](http://www.greenseal.org) and UL Environment's [ECOLOGO \(industries.ul.com/environment\)](http://industries.ul.com/environment).

2. 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 \(CPG\)](#) available at epa.gov/smm/comprehensive-procurement-guidelines-non-paper-office-products.

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 and UL Environment's ECOLOGO program are third party certifying organizations that use open, transparent standards and evaluate multiple attributes based on the lifecycle of the product. Each organization has established standards and certified 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 has created a 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, ECOLOGO 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 - Paper Covered	75-100% postconsumer content.	EPA CPG
Binders - Plastic Covered Paperboard	20% postconsumer content in pressboard. Consider alternatives to vinyl (PVC).	EPA CPG
Binders – Solid Plastic	HDPE: 90% postconsumer, PE: 30-50% postconsumer, PET: 100% postconsumer, Misc. Plastics: 80% postconsumer contents.	EPA CPG
Clipboards - Plastic	HDPE: 90% postconsumer, PS: 50% postconsumer, Misc. Plastics: 15% postconsumer contents.	EPA CPG
Correction Fluid	Ozone-safe (no harmful solvents), water-based, certified AP non-toxic (“approved product” by Art and Creative Materials Institute, ACMI).	The Art and Creative Materials Institute, Inc. (ACMI)
Highlighters and Markers	Water-based, certified AP non-toxic (“approved product” by Art and Creative Materials Institute, ACMI), conforming to ASTM D-4236. Choose refillable if available. Dry erase or permanent markers: choose “low odor.”	The Art and Creative Materials Institute, Inc. (ACMI)
Labels	30% postconsumer and/or free of chlorine or any derivatives as a bleaching agent (such as paper that is processed chlorine-free).	Green Seal
Office Recycling, Organics, Garbage Containers	Plastic: 20-100% postconsumer content; Steel: 16% postconsumer content.	EPA CPG
Paper Clips	Consider metal or plastic paper clips instead of vinyl (PVC) coated paper clips.	Sustainable Hospitals: Reducing PVC in the Office
Pens and Pencils	Choose refillable. If single-use, look for 50% postconsumer content or compostable.	UL/ECOLOGO
Plastic Desktop Accessories including desk organizers, sorters, trays; memo, note and pencil holders	25-80% postconsumer content. Consider vinyl (PVC)-free alternatives.	EPA CPG
Plastic Envelopes	25% postconsumer content.	EPA CPG

Product/Category	Suggested Environmental Attributes	Environmental Standard/ Guideline
Plastic File Folders, Presentation Folders and Clip Portfolios	HDPE: 90% postconsumer content.	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 vinyl (PVC)-free alternatives (such as polypropylene or pressboard).	Sustainable Hospitals: Reducing PVC in the Office
Sheet Protectors	Consider vinyl (PVC)-free alternatives (such as polypropylene).	Sustainable Hospitals: Reducing PVC in the Office
Toner Cartridges	EPA recommends agencies procure remanufactured toner cartridges or new toner cartridges with recovered materials (includes both pre-consumer and post-consumer content).	EPA CPG

3. 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.

4. OFFICE RECYCLING, ORGANICS AND GARBAGE CONTAINERS

Indoor containers for recyclables, organics or garbage 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.



5. 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'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 their vendor. 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.

6. 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.
- **Green Seal** has been developing life cycle-based sustainability standards and conducting third-party certification since 1989. For lists of approved products, click on “[Find the Green Seal](http://www.greenseal.org)” at www.greenseal.org.
- **UL Environment’s ECOLOGO Program** certifies products that meet multi-attribute, life cycle-based sustainability standards. For lists of approved products, see the “[Sustainable Products Guide](http://industries.ul.com/environment)” at <http://industries.ul.com/environment>.
- **The California Department of General Services Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program** provides information on how the State is succeeding in buying environmentally sustainable products and services. Click on the “[Buyers Guide](http://www.dgs.ca.gov/BuyingGreen)” tab at www.dgs.ca.gov/BuyingGreen to find detailed information on State contracts and recommendations for greening commercial products and services.
- **The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Sustainable Marketplace** provides information and tools for institutional purchasers, consumers and manufacturers to help identify, evaluate and purchase greener products and services. See www.epa.gov/greenerproducts.

7. 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!

8. 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** offers technical assistance to Alameda County public agencies for purchasing environmentally preferable products. Resources such as additional fact sheets, guides and links to other helpful environmental purchasing websites and documents can be found at www.StopWaste.org/EPP.
- To find out how and where to recycle any type of recyclable item in Alameda County, check out the online search tool “**RecycleWhere?**” at www.StopWaste.org/recycle.
- **Alameda County and the General Services Agency** are committed to sharing their resources and experiences to promote green purchasing in public agencies. Policies, success stories, bids, specifications and other resources are available at www.acsustain.org.

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 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.

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9. APPENDIX – RECYCLED CONTENT OFFICE RECYCLING, ORGANICS AND GARBAGE CONTAINER SUPPLIERS

This table lists a sampling of suppliers and purchasing information for indoor office recycling, organics and garbage 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 online or other local resources, or contact the manufacturers for local distributors near you.

VENDOR NAME	INDOOR SYSTEMS	DESKSIDE BINS	MANUFACTURER	COMMENTS
American Recycled Products www.americanrecycledproducts.com (888) 256-3699 Florida	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of recycled content container sizes and colors
Bagit System www.bagitsystem.com (503) 538-8180 Oregon	YES	NO	YES	Reusable bag systems using recycled plastic frame supports and bags
Bright Ideas Shops www.brightideashops.com (330) 258-0168 Ohio	NO	NO	YES	Recycled plastic lumber containers designed for city and park garbage and recycling
Busch Systems www.buschsystems.com (800) 565-9931 Ontario	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of recycled content container sizes and colors
CleanRiver Recycling Solutions www.cleanriver.com (888) 628-5756 Ontario	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of recycled content container styles, sizes and colors
ClearStream Recycling www.clearstreamrecycling.com (855) 411-4321 Illinois	YES	NO	YES	ClearStream system for special events uses recycled content plastic bags; recycled content square bins for offices

VENDOR NAME	INDOOR SYSTEMS	DESKSIDE BINS	MANUFACTURER	COMMENTS
Cole Supply www.colesupply.com (800) 762-2653, (707) 745-8900 California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
Continental Commercial Products continentalcommercialproducts.com (800) 325-1051 Missouri	YES	YES	YES	Continental commercial products - deskside bins and select central containers have recycled content
Eco-Pop Designs www.ecopopdesigns.com (650) 346-4458 California	NO	NO	YES	Steel construction; custom designs; cement receptacle mounts
Grainger www.grainger.com (888) 472-4643 California branch	YES	YES	NO	Comprehensive variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
Kingsley www.kingsley.com (909) 445-1240 California	YES	NO	YES	Free standing and prescription/expired drug systems; aluminum construction
ORBIS Corporation www.orbiscorporation.com (416) 745-7106 Wisconsin	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of containers made with recycled plastic
Recycle Away www.recycleaway.com (800) 664-5340 Vermont	YES	YES	NO	Comprehensive variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
Recycling Rules! www.recyclingrules.org (888) 567-8428 Georgia	YES	YES	NO	Indoor recycling bins sold at cost, all with recycled content. Customizable decals. A non-profit organization.
RecyclingBin.com www.recyclingbin.com (800) 910-4757 New Jersey	YES	YES	YES	Specialize in hexagonal plastic; customized designs and printing

VENDOR NAME	INDOOR SYSTEMS	DESKSIDE BINS	MANUFACTURER	COMMENTS
Rehrig Pacific Company www.rehrigpacific.com (800) 421-6244, (323) 262-5145 California	YES	YES	YES	Recycled content up to 25% on customer request; can accommodate custom designs
Rescue Earth Recycling www.rescueearth.com (800) 275-0460, (619) 588-7700 California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
Royal Basket Trucks www.royal-basket.com (800) 426-6447 Wisconsin	NO	NO	YES	Enviro Cart and other rolling carts with heavy duty bag compartments for collection
Rubbermaid Commercial Products www.rubbermaidcommercial.com (800) 347-9800, (540) 667-8700 Virginia	YES	YES	YES	Rubbermaid commercial products - deskside bins and select central containers have recycled content
Starline Supply Company www.starlinesupply.com (888) 362-5326, (510) 893-7572 California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
SupplyWorks www.supplyworks.com (888) 820-6515 California branch	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
T.M. Fitzgerald & Associates www.tmfitzgerald.com (888) 795-0660 Pennsylvania	YES	YES	YES	Large variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
The Fibrex Group www.fibrexgroup.com (866) 756-4560 Virginia	YES	NO	YES	Large variety of recycled content containers for individual and central stations
Uline www.uline.com (800) 295-5510 California branch	YES	YES	NO	Comprehensive variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content

VENDOR NAME	INDOOR SYSTEMS	DESKSIDE BINS	MANUFACTURER	COMMENTS
Waste Wise Products www.wastewiseproducts.com (877) 680-8361, (416) 686-6816 Ontario	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content
Waxie Sanitary Supply www.waxie.com (800) 995-4466 California	YES	YES	NO	Large variety of commercial containers - check for those with recycled content