



Utah Department of Environmental Quality

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10 Key Steps to Adopting

An

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program

Your business has the power to make a positive impact on the environment. By using your buying power, your business can influence the market towards products that are less harmful to the environment. Businesses that adopt Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) programs consider the impacts a product or service has on the environment, in addition to price, performance, and availability, compared with competing products or services. Many EPP products work as well or better than traditional products and can even save you money. By following the next ten steps, your business can begin implementing an EPP program:

Step 1: Developing a Strategy for Winning Senior Leadership Support

To begin an EPP program, you should have the support of the business owner or upper management. With this commitment, you are reassuring employees that your EPP program is supported at the highest level of your company.

Your company can benefit from an EPP program in the following ways:

- Set your company and its products or services apart from competitors;
- Enhance your image in the community;
- Improve worker safety by eliminating exposure to toxic cleaners, solvents, and building products;
- Reduce overhead, waste disposal, and environmental liability costs by selecting less hazardous materials; and
- Increase availability of EPP in the marketplace

EPP can be as simple as choosing to use a less toxic cleaner. Or EPP can be as complex as evaluating the environmental impact of one type of **carpet** to another product throughout the product's life cycle from raw material selection, manufacture, packaging and distribution, use, and disposal. Many of the

resources listed in this guide include life cycle assessments for popular products so you have the information you need for choosing more environmentally preferable products.

Step 2: Setting up an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Team

EPP programs require coordination between users and waste managers, in addition to purchasers. A representative from the purchasing staff can help shape a workable framework. Users are knowledgeable about the performance attributes. And waste managers can provide valuable information about what products are used the most, what products create a waste issue since they don't get used up, and disposal costs. Consider using an existing Green Team or other environmental team to function as an EPP Team. Include regional representatives, if your company is large, as a point-of-contact for all employees in that region. The leader of the team should be directly responsible for implementing the EPP program and have an interest in the mission of the program.

Step 3: Evaluate Current Products and Practices

Conduct an audit of the products, equipment, and practices in your business to evaluate them from an environmental and human health standpoint. Consider conducting the audits over a period of time, if your business is large. Identify which products contain hazardous substances and can be replaced by more environmentally-friendly alternatives. Examine processes and procedures and determine where improvements can be made. Always remember to consult with users, since they may have problems with a product and would welcome a change to an EPP product. The users will be more supportive of an EPP program if an existing problem is solved by using an EPP product.

EPA's [Environmentally Preferable Purchasing](#) web page provides valuable tools and case studies for popular environmentally preferable products and services, including environmental attributes to look for and procurement guidance. EPP information is provided for the following product categories: Buildings and Construction, Carpets, Cleaning, Electronics, Fleets, Food Services, Landscaping, Meetings and Conferences, Office Supplies, and Paper.

[Center for a New American Dream](#) features best practices for implementing an EPP program including model policies and specifications for RFPs, in addition to other EPP tools.

[Clean Production Action's](#) web page for manufacturers provides strategic solutions for green chemicals, sustainable materials, and environmentally preferable products. The web page includes the "Green Screen" benchmarking

tool that assesses how hazardous a chemical is and then provides less hazardous options.

[EPEAT \(Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool\)](#) is a stakeholder-developed environmental performance standard that enables purchasers to evaluate and select electronic products (currently laptops, desktops, and workstations and monitors with printers and TVs in development) according to 51 lifestyle environmental criteria. EPEAT was developed with support from EPA and is required for all US government purchases.

[Green Seal](#) is an independent, non-profit organization that provides science-based environmental certification standards to help manufacturers, purchasers, and end users make environmentally-responsible purchasing and manufacturing choices.

[INFORM](#) Strategies for a Better Environment offers a “Cleaning for Health” manual that provides information on a new generation of cleaning products and practices that are cost competitive and meet performance needs but contain less toxic substances than traditional cleaners.

[Practice Greenhealth EPP Program](#) is designed for healthcare providers but provides RFP language for a wide variety of products and services, general guidance for approaching EPP projects, and a list of web resources for finding products that you may be purchasing without a formal RFP.

[Responsible Purchasing Network](#) is a membership program but provides an array of free resources as well. The network offers detailed guidance on EPP efforts in multiple product and service areas, model RFP language, case studies, and, for members, a newsletter and direct assistance.

[StopWaste](#) website features various fact sheets and Guidelines for Buying Environmentally Preferable Products, a guide, that lists various types of products (e.g. paper office supplies, office furnishings, janitorial cleaning products, etc.); the environmental attribute to consider when purchasing; the source of the associated “green” standard or guideline on which the environmental attribute is based; and notes or links for further information about that specific type of product.

Step 4: Establishing a Working Relationship with Vendors

Purchasing departments are the central control point for nearly every product or service that is purchased by a business. This is where the money is transferred from a business to a vendor, contracts are developed, and relationships with vendors are developed. Because purchasing is where money changes hands, it can offer the greatest leverage with vendors to ensure that products are purchased that are less damaging to the environment and human health than

competing products. Ask for product samples and equipment demonstrations. Coordinate training sessions for new products, procedures, and equipment. Demand products with less packaging and packaging that can be recycled. To assess the impacts of your purchasing changes, require reporting and analysis from vendors, such as the number of 'greener' products purchased yearly, amount of toxic materials avoided, and energy saved or other metrics.

Step 5: Identifying Opportunities for Improvement, Prioritizing Efforts and Setting Goals

Start with a small, manageable pilot project. It is easy to switch to numerous environmentally preferable products all at once since there are a lot of great products out there. But, several small successful pilot projects will help you gain additional support and credibility. Then you can expand your program little by little over a period of time, such as three to five years or even longer depending on resources and other company goals.

Try to set goals that are specific, measurable, and can be completed in a specific time period. For example:

- Increase purchase of cleaning products, paints, and other chemicals that are less toxic than competing products by 25% in the next contract.
- Increase purchase of products that use less packaging by 20% in 12 months.
- Choose only Energy Star certified or EPEAT registered products when replacing electronic equipment or appliances.
- Increase purchase of recycled content products or reusable products by 25% by the next fiscal year. By purchasing recycled content products, you are helping to "close the loop" by providing markets for recovered materials.
- Increase purchase of products with a long life span, such as rechargeable batteries by 25% in 12 months.

Step 6: Developing policies and procedures

To make sure that you have the support that you need for your EPP program, request a policy statement or job description revisions from top management. Using the EPP resources included in this guide, work with the purchasing department to develop RFP language as needed.

If an EPP product requires a change in practice (using less solvent) or a procedure (using a less hazardous cleaner), then procedures or policies may need to be developed to educate employees about the change. Outline in writing the person who is responsible for ensuring that policies or procedures are followed and a timeline.

Step 7: Determining a Strategy for Evaluating EPP Products

It's important to monitor and evaluate your EPP projects to ensure continued success. Develop an audit process to monitor the progress of the pilot study or other EPP project. Set up a mechanism for receiving feedback from employees and product users. Review and evaluate the feedback and use it to improve your current policies and procedures or use the feedback in future projects. Of course, the complexity and detail of this reporting will depend on how significant a change you are making – switching a single product may not require more than a short email survey of users. If a product, practice, or procedure did not work, then make necessary improvements or move forward to another project. In order to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of an EPP program, you should track any income generated by the program as well as your savings in disposal costs, operating expenses, and purchasing expenditures.

Step 8: Initiating an Education & Awareness Effort

Determine your educational needs for implementing an EPP program. At a minimum, your education program should include information about the goals of the EPP program, how your business, employees, and the environment benefit from using EPP products, and how new products or practices will be evaluated. Also provide information on how employees will be trained to use the new product or practice and the type of mechanisms that will be used for obtaining and evaluating feedback from employees and product users. The education program should be available to existing as well as new employees. Consider a reward, such as movie tickets, or other recognition, such as a highlight in the company newsletter, for employees that go out of their way to educate themselves or others about a new product or practice.

Step 9: Launching Your Program

Post notices in key areas of your business to educate staff on the new environmentally preferable products that are being used within your business. Provide information on any new procedures or policies being adopted during the switch to EPP products. Use this opportunity to again include information on how your business, employees, and the environment benefit from using EPP products, and how employees and customers can provide feedback about the specific product or practice. Include contact information for your EPP team members.

Continue meeting with the EPP Team to review ongoing efforts, make adjustments as needed, and collaborate on new initiatives.

Step 10: Celebrating Your Successes

Provide regular updates to employees and management about your EPP program in newsletters (preferably on-line) and meetings, using the data from your tracking system. Consider equating your company's successes in terms of the number of trees spared, energy and water saved, toxic materials eliminated, or the amount of waste diverted from the landfill by using products that use less packaging. Two good resources to use for environmental "factoids" are: http://www.nerc.org/documents/environmental_benefits_calculator.html and www.environmentaldefense.org/papercalculator/

Give rewards and recognition to EPP Team members and key members of your company when you celebrate your successes. Remember, your EPP program goals and successes can be an effective marketing opportunity.