

# Sonoma County’s Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy

## 1. Purpose

By including environmental considerations in our purchasing decisions, along with the traditional concerns of price, performance, and availability, the County of Sonoma will promote practices that improve public health and safety, reduce pollution, and conserve natural resources and energy.

## 2. Defining Environmentally Preferable

Environmentally preferable products and services are those that have a reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose. This comparison may consider raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance, or disposal of the product or service.

When determining if a product is environmentally preferable, the following environmental attributes should be considered (see Appendix A for definitions):

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biobased</li><li>• Biodegradable</li><li>• Carcinogen-free</li><li>• Chlorofluorocarbon (CC)-free</li><li>• Compostable</li><li>• Durable</li><li>• Energy efficient</li><li>• Heavy metal free (e.g., no lead, mercury, cadmium)</li><li>• Less hazardous</li><li>• Low volatile organic compound (VOC) content</li><li>• Low-toxicity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Made from rapidly renewable materials</li><li>• Persistent, bioaccumulative toxic (PBT)-free</li><li>• Recyclable</li><li>• Recycled content</li><li>• Reduced greenhouse gas emissions</li><li>• Reduced packaging</li><li>• Refurbished</li><li>• Resource efficiency</li><li>• Reusable</li><li>• Upgradeable</li><li>• Water efficient</li></ul>
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### **3. Balancing Environmental Considerations with Performance, Availability, and Financial Costs**

The County is committed to buying more environmentally preferable goods and services as long as they meet performance needs and they are available within a reasonable period of time at a reasonable cost. Nothing in this policy shall be construed as requiring a purchaser or contractor to procure products that do not perform adequately for their intended use, exclude adequate competition (as outlined in Procurement of Goods & Equipment Policies & Procedures), or are not available at a reasonable price or in a reasonable period of time.

The County will consider lifecycle costs or best value purchasing strategies when comparing costs of products or services. Life cycle costs include the life of the items, maintenance, operations, end of useful life, residual value, and replacement costs. Best value recognizes that competition exists not only in prices, but also in the technical competence of suppliers, their ability to make timely deliveries and the quality and performance (including environmental performance) of their products and services. Best value purchasing principles allow flexibility to choose a vendor or contract without the lowest bid providing certain criteria are met that are in the best interests of the County.

### **4. Specifications, Solicitation Language, and Purchasing Regulation**

The County's Purchasing Division shall ensure wherever possible, that specifications, solicitation language, and purchasing regulations are amended to expand the use of more environmentally preferable products in all procurements.

Whenever possible, specifications shall include the following:

Sonoma County's goal is to expand the purchase and use of environmentally preferable products. In order to meet this goal we are requesting that suppliers complete an environmental (green) survey as part of their bid documentation.

All products and services must meet or exceed the standards set by independent accredited organization in order to be deemed environmentally preferable. Examples of independent accredited organizations recognized by the County are as follows:

- Environmental Choice [www.environmentalchoice.com](http://www.environmentalchoice.com)
- Green Seal [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org)
- Energy Star [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)
- EnerGuide <http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/energuide>
- EPEAT
- PowerSmart [www.bchydro.com](http://www.bchydro.com)
- ISO 14000 [www.iso.org/iso/home.htm](http://www.iso.org/iso/home.htm)
- Sonoma County Water Agency [www.scwa.ca.gov](http://www.scwa.ca.gov) (water efficient toilets)

- ABAG [www.abag.ca.gov](http://www.abag.ca.gov) (listings of Green Businesses)

## 5. Promoting Environmental Purchasing

The following steps will assist the County in its commitment to purchasing more environmentally preferable goods and services. As noted in 3.0, goods and services must still meet performance needs and be available in a reasonable period of time at a reasonable cost.

### 5.1 County's Purchasing Division:

- Will promote the purchase of environmentally preferable products or products with a recycled or recyclable content over a virgin product if the cost is not greater than 5 percent (e.g., 5% preference).
- Shall ensure wherever possible, that specifications, solicitation language, and purchasing regulations are amended to expand the use of more environmentally preferable products in all procurements.
- Will consider lifecycle or best value costs in its consideration of costs.
- Will provide information on environmental purchasing on its website and intranet sites.
- Will continue to post information on the availability of surplus furniture, equipment and office supplies for reuse by other County departments.

### 5.2 County Departments:

Are responsible for ensuring that its employees, contractors and vendors are aware of the County's desire to buy more environmentally preferable goods and services.

Are responsible for ensuring that any of its employees who have been issued credit cards are fully aware of their responsibilities under this policy and other County procurement policies.

## 6. Policy Updates

The Purchasing Division will review and update the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy when necessary.

### Reference

Board adopts Climate Protection Plan by summary action on September 12, 2006

Res.#89-2195 – Board of Supervisors, Establishment of Policy for Procurement of Recycled Products

Res.# 2001-025 – Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, Adoption of Green Purchasing Policy

California Code, Public Contract Code relating to Local Governments and Buy Recycled Programs.

California Public Contract Code Section 12400-12404

1993 U.S. Government Executive Order

Environmental Purchasing Policies 101: An Overview of Current Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policies, developed for Commission for Environmental Cooperation

Attachments

Appendix A – Environmental Purchasing Definitions

## **Appendix A Environmental Purchasing Definitions**

Environmental Purchasing terms reprinted from Environmental Purchasing Policies 101: An Overview of Current Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policies, developed for Commission for Environmental Cooperation ([www.cec.org](http://www.cec.org))

- Acute toxicity- Capable of producing illness from a single dose or minimal exposure.
- Bioaccumulate - Ability of some substances to collect in plant and animal tissue. These substances increase in concentration as they pass through the food chain when the plants and animals are consumed by larger animals (such as humans).
- Biobased product – Products produced from renewable plant and animal sources. They are generally presumed to be more environmentally benign than their petroleum based counterparts, although this is not necessarily true. They are usually biodegradable and can be returned to the earth at the end of their useful life or recycled and used again. As defined by the US Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (FSRIA), a biobased product is a product determined by the US Secretary of Agriculture to be a commercial or industrial product (other than food or feed), that is composed in whole or in significant part, of biological products or renewable domestic agricultural materials (including plant, animal and marine materials) or forestry materials.
- Biodegradable – the ability of a substance to decompose in the natural environments into harmless raw materials. To be truly biodegradable, a substance or material should break down into carbon dioxide (a nutrient for plants), water, and naturally occurring minerals that also do not cause harm to the ecosystem. In terms of environmental benefits, a product should take months or years, and not centuries, to biodegrade.
- Buyer - Anyone authorized to purchase on behalf of the organization or its subdivisions.
- Carcinogen – A substance known to cause cancer in humans.
- Chlorine free – Manufactured without chlorine or chlorine derivatives.
- Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) – Any of a group of compounds that contain carbon, chlorine, fluorine, and sometimes hydrogen and have been used as refrigerants, cleaning solvents, aerosol propellants and in the manufacture of plastic foams. The uses of CFCs are being phased out because they destroy the planet's stratospheric ozone protection layer.
- Chronic health risks – Detrimental, long term health effects from repeated exposure to a product.
- Chronic toxicity – Capable of producing illness from repeated exposure
- Compostable – A product that can be placed into a composition of decaying biodegradable materials and eventually turn into a nutrient-rich material. It is synonymous with “biodegradable”, except it is limited to solid materials (liquid products are not considered compostable).

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- Cooperative purchasing – System for allowing organizations to combine their purchasing power in order to negotiate better prices and reduce the purchasing costs of a formal bid process.
- Durable - A product that remains useful and usable for a long time without noticeable deterioration in performance.
- Energy efficient product – A product that is in the upper 25 percent of energy efficiency for all similar products, or that is at least 10 percent more efficient than the minimum level meeting US federal government standards.
- Environmentally preferable products and services - Products and services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products and services that serve the same purpose. This comparison may consider raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance and/or disposal of the product or service.
- Extended producer responsibility – A product and waste management system in which manufacturers and consumers take responsibility for the environmentally safe management of products once the products reaches the end of their useful life. As the manufacturers have the greatest ability to influence product design, they have the greatest responsibility for the product’s end of life reuse, refurbish, recycling, or legal disposal. Retailer “take back” or “mail back” programs are two such examples.
- Flashpoint - The minimum temperature at which a liquid gives off a vapor in sufficient concentration to ignite.
- Full-cost accounting – Accounting for the economic, environmental, land use, human health, social and heritage costs and benefits of a particular decision or action to ensure no costs associated with the decision or action, including externalized costs, are left unaccounted. (Compare with Lifecycle Cost and Product Life cycle.)
- Greenhouse gases – Any of several dozen heat-trapping trace gases in the earth’s atmosphere that absorb infrared radiation. The two major greenhouse gases are water vapor and carbon dioxide; lesser greenhouse gases include methane, ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), CFCs, and nitrogen oxides.
- LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system – A self-assessment system developed by the US Green Building Council <[www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)> for rating the environmental preferability of new and existing commercial, institution, and high-rise residential buildings.
- Life cycle cost – The amortized annual cost of a product or service, including capital costs, installation costs, operating costs, maintenance costs, and end of useful life costs discounted over the lifetime of the product or service. (Compare with Product Life cycle.)
- Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) – Written or printed material about a product that includes information on though product’s physical and chemical characteristics; physical and health hazards; precautions for safe handling and use; control measures;

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emergency and first aid procedures; the date of preparation of the MSDS or the last change to it; and the name, address, and telephone number of the manufacturer.

- Mutagen – Substance that causes mutations, changes to genetic material in the body.
- Persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic compounds (PBT's) – Toxic chemicals that persist in the environment and increase in concentration through food chains as larger animals consume PBT-laden smaller animals. They transfer rather easily among air, water, and land, and span boundaries of programs, geography, and generations. As a result, PBTs pose risks to human health and ecosystems. They are associated with a range of adverse human health effects, including effects on the nervous system, reproductive and developmental problems, cancer, and genetic impact. They include heavy metals and chemicals such as mercury, dioxins, and PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls).
- Post-consumer recycled content – Percentage of a product made from materials and byproducts recovered or diverted from the solid waste stream after having completed their usefulness as consumer items and used in place of raw or virgin material. Post-consumer recycled content includes materials (such as paper, bottles, and cans) collected for recycling.
- Practicable – Sufficient in performance and available at a reasonable price.
- Preconsumer materials – Recovered materials that were production finished materials, products or byproducts that did not reach the consumer for whose use they were intended, and have been diverted from the solid waste stream for the purposes of collection, recycling, and disposition.
- Price preference – A percentage by which offered prices for recycled products are reduced for purposes of bid evaluation. For example, under a 5 percent price preference, if a bid of \$1.00 per unit is received for an environmentally preferable product meeting specifications, the bid price will be reduced by \$0.05 (5 percent) and evaluated as though it had been for \$0.95. If this bid results in a contract award the price actually contracted will be the bid price of \$1.00 per unit.
- Product life cycle – The culmination of environmental impacts for a product, including raw material acquisition, manufacturing, distribution, use, maintenance, and end of useful life or ultimate disposal of the product. (Compare with Life cycle cost.)
- Recyclable product – a product that after its intended end use can be diverted from the solid waste stream for use as a raw material in the manufacture of another product.
- Recovered materials – Waste materials and by-products that have been recovered or diverted from the solid waste stream.
- Recycled materials - Material and byproducts that have been recovered or diverted from solid waste and have been utilized in place of raw or virgin material in manufacturing a product. It is derived from post-consumer recycled materials, manufacturing waste, industrial scrap, agricultural waste, and other waste material,

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but does not include material or byproducts generated from, and commonly reused within, an original manufacturing process.

- Refurbished product – A product that has been completely disassembled and restored to its original working order while maximizing the reuse of its original materials.
- Renewable materials – Materials made from plant-based feedstock capable of regenerating in less than 200 years, such as trees and agricultural products. Rapidly renewable resources, such as grain-based feedstocks, regenerate in less than two years.
- Sustainable - An action is sustainable if it satisfied present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
- Teratogen – A substance that adversely affects fetal development.
- Upgradeable product – The ability to increase a product’s performance or features without replacing the product.
- Virgin material – Any material occurring in its natural form. Virgin material is used in the form of raw material in the manufacture of new products.
- Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) – Chemicals that readily evaporate and contribute to the formation of air pollution when released into the atmosphere. May VOCs are classified as toxic and carcinogenic.
- Water efficient A product that is in the upper 25 percent of water efficiency for all similar products, or that is at least 10 percent more efficient than the minimum level meeting US federal government standards.