



Recycle at Work

RESPONSIBLE PURCHASING

Durable vs. Disposable

Switch to buying durable dishware. The environmental impacts of washing reusable items are lower than the impacts of using disposables.

“Responsible purchasing” means making choices about which product to choose based on the environmental impacts of manufacturing, transporting, using and disposing of that product.

What we buy and how much we buy impacts the environment

Nearly half of our nation’s greenhouse gas emissions are associated with the production, transportation and disposal of products in the United States. In addition to greenhouse gases, other environmental considerations in making purchasing choices include water use, pollution, recyclability, energy, toxins and the impact on wildlife habitat, just to name a few. For most products, the environmental impacts associated with manufacturing are much larger than the impacts of disposal.

Understanding which products are truly “greener” than others can be a daunting challenge. Consider the following tips when making purchasing decisions.

Close the loop: Buy products made with recycled content

Buying recycled-content products ensures that the materials collected in your recycling programs will be used again in the making of new products.

Prevent waste at its source

Products that are durable and have a long life eliminate the need for frequent replacement, saving money and reducing pollution in the long run. Choose products that can be reused – mugs instead of disposable cups, for example.

For more information

Visit www.RecycleAtWork.com or call Metro Recycling Information at 503-234-3000.

continued

Fact sheets were created by Metro and your local governments to help reduce waste in the business sector. Printed on recycled paper. 09150



Recycle at Work
from Metro and your local governments

Make sure electronics are energy efficient

For electronic products, the energy consumed during use often impacts the environment more than the making or disposing of the product. Look for equipment that has been certified as energy efficient, and turn equipment off when not in use.

Confirm whether the recyclable product is accepted locally

Just because a product is labeled “recyclable” doesn’t mean it’s accepted by local programs. Make sure the material in a product is accepted in your area.

Determine when to buy local

Buying products made locally supports local economies and reduces environmental impacts associated with transportation. However, transportation impacts often are much smaller than those caused by some manufacturing processes. Weighing the benefits and impacts helps determine when to buy local.

Invest in responsible purchasing

Some products, such as recycled-content copy paper, costs 10 percent to 15 percent more than virgin copy paper. Once a commitment is made to responsible purchasing, costs can be compensated by reducing paper (choosing double-sided printing) and reducing energy waste (turning off computers). Other products, such as remanufactured printer cartridges, can offer significant savings (see web link below).

Make a commitment: Create policy and renew contracts

A responsible-purchasing policy can be as simple as a statement of commitment or can provide detailed procedures. Incorporate policy and preferences in vendor contracts. Vendors and contractors also can help track progress toward your business’s sustainability goals.

Look for products that are certified

Be wary of “green-washing.” Some manufacturers, service providers and trade associations may create “green” labels for their product or service lines that do not meet credible, independent standards. Check with neutral and reliable resources to determine whether a certification system is credible. There are many different environmental certification programs for products. Visit the following web sites to learn more.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RESPONSIBLE PURCHASING

Purchasing guide

http://stopwaste.org/docs/resource_guide_for_ep_products_3-06.pdf

Packaging options

www.deq.state.or.us/lq/pubs/docs/sw/packaging/lifecycleinventoryshort.pdf

Certification programs and certified products

www.ecy.wa.gov/beyondwaste/epp/stand_certifications.html

Information on green-washing

www.terrachoice.com/Home/Six%20Sins%20of%20Greenwashing/The%20Six%20Sins

Savings from remanufactured toner cartridges

www.stopwaste.org/docs/toner.pdf

Sources

**Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**