

# Waste Reduction Through Business Purchasing

Purchasing or inbound logistics departments can take a number of steps to foster waste prevention. This list of ideas was approved by professional procurement officers and is intended to help you jump-start your waste prevention efforts and save money too.

Review your existing purchasing policies to assure they do not inhibit or exclude buying goods with recycled content or products designed to be reused or recycled.

Try to procure products that reduce waste. These include products that:

- Are designed to last a long time (utilize long warranties and repair service options when appropriate).
- Have replaceable parts so they are easy to repair.
- Can be easily reused or recycled.
- Are made from recycled materials.
- Do not contain toxic materials.
- Have minimal packaging, if any.

Take a stand and be heard. Show your commitment to using resources wisely by stating in bid packets that your organization expects suppliers to participate in waste prevention and recycling. Ask vendors to identify products that promote waste prevention and recycling.

### **Policies and Practices that Encourage Waste Prevention**

Perform lifecycle cost analysis that includes an assessment of a product's maintenance, energy and water use, and disposal costs.

Allow a price preference for durable, reusable, repairable, and recycled products. Some products made with virgin materials receive tax breaks and other subsidies that drive down the prices of products. Consider using cost savings from waste reduction activities to pay for more

expensive but less wasteful products. An alternative to price preferences is to use "set-asides" that require that a certain portion of purchases for a given commodity be satisfied with products meeting waste reduction standards.

Centralize purchasing through one department or person. This allows easier adoption of waste reduction purchasing policies.

Distribute supplies so a cost is associated with them. Make each department accountable for the supplies they use.

Conduct a pre-purchase review to consider alternatives to disposable and single-use products.

Re-evaluate items purchased. Are they really necessary? (For example, some cafeterias have stopped purchasing straws.)

Purchase refillable or reusable products (for example, refillable pens and pencils, mugs, flatware, dishes, air filters, rags, cloth towels, or air dryers).

Practice "just-in-time supply" to avoid overpurchasing and spoilage.

Purchase products that don't need batteries.

Select non-toxic or less toxic products. Read labels. When possible, select products that do not have warnings and do not require special handling or ventilation.

Buy concentrated cleaning solutions in bulk form. These give you more product for less packaging. Dispense liquid solutions in pump spray bottles rather than aerosol containers.

Purchase products without packaging, with less packaging, or that are packed in reusable packaging. Ask suppliers not to overpackage orders. (You may have to keep asking over and over!)

Ask vendors to take back packaging. In some cases they may be able to reuse it. Alternatively, save and reuse packaging materials. Offer excess packaging materials to firms that can use them.

Purchase copiers and printers that make two-sided copies reliably.

Purchase rebuilt or refilled toner cartridges. These generally are much cheaper than new ones. Check your warranty and contact several vendors because quality varies.

Negotiate longer, more comprehensive warranties and service contracts for equipment. Maintain equipment to maximize its life.

Educate employees about waste prevention through purchasing. Purchasing and inbound logistics departments base orders on employee requests. Employees need to know what to ask for.

Try to repair, refurbish, or rebuild before buying new.

Purchase quality used or remanufactured products instead of new ones.

Contact the California Materials Exchange (CalMAX) to advertise or find low-cost or free used materials. See [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/CalMAX/](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/CalMAX/) or call toll free 1-877-520-9703.

## Buying Recycled Products

The collection of recyclable materials is only the first step of the process we call recycling. If you do not buy products made with recycled content, you are not recycling. Remember to ask about a product's "postconsumer content." This means the product was made from materials that were used and recycled by consumers, rather than from manufacturing wastes. Here is a look at some of the materials you recycle and the new products that are being made from them:

**Recycled Paper.** Virtually every paper product you purchase is available with recycled content. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends 20 percent postconsumer content for toilet tissue and 50 percent for office paper and envelopes.

Recycled glass is currently being used to manufacture all kinds of containers, pressed and blown glass products, beautiful floor and wall tiles, glass blocks, sandblasting material, reflective paint for road signs, and in road building materials. It is also used as a drainage medium and in filtration systems.

**Recycled plastics.** Products made from recycled plastic include auto battery cases, car bumpers, furniture, garment bags, hangers, jackets, pillows, sleeping bags, laundry detergent bottles, motor oil bottles, flower pots, residential and commercial drainage pipe, traffic-barrier cones, milk-bottle crates, trash cans, videocassette casings, packaging "peanuts," toys, insulation, film plastics, plastic lumber, landscape timbers, picnic tables, pallets, and marine piers.

**Compost.** Landscape trimmings are made into a variety of soil amendments and mulches that help to keep weeds out and moisture in.

**Tires.** Besides being retreaded for reuse, tires are processed into "raw materials" (crumb rubber) for use in rubberized and rubber-modified-asphalt paving materials. Tires are also used in building construction, erosion control, artificial marine habitats, crash barriers, and playground equipment.

**Used Oil and Antifreeze.** Used motor oil is re-refined into new motor oil, as well as transmission fluid and lubricating oils of very high quality. Recycled-content antifreeze is also available.

**Construction and Demolition Debris.** Wood waste is processed into a variety of products such as compost, mulch, sawdust, woodchips, pressed-wood logs, and fiberboard. Drywall is crushed and used as a soil amendment, or in the manufacture—along with old newspaper—of floor underlayment. Fiberglass insulation and paint are other examples of building products with recycled content.

## Additional Resources

For a complete list of business waste prevention resources, see [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/BizWaste/Index.htm](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/BizWaste/Index.htm).

**The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, Flex Your Power and visit [www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html](http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html).**