

Recycled-Content Products Deserve Another Look

Recycled-content products (RCP) have been around for a long time. In fact, many waste hauling companies began decades ago as scrap merchants turning discards into industrial feedstock. With the expansion of consumer-based recycling in the early 1970s following the first Earth Day celebration, the quantity and variety of available secondary materials inspired a quest for new products to be made from recovered resources.

Unfortunately, some of these products were frivolous or not well designed and gave RCPs a bad name. The RCPs of today are an entirely new breed of high-tech, high-value, earth-friendly products.

Purchasing RCPs presents a tremendous opportunity. First and foremost, RCPs provide your company, office, or home with a quality product capable of meeting any performance specifications. Secondly, with the wide array of RCPs currently available, you can save money when buying recycled.

Additionally, RCPs are good for the environment, reducing the demand for virgin resources and preserving landfill space. Buying RCPs from local manufacturers and suppliers also enhances economic development at the local level.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) is dedicated to informing the public—both businesses and consumers—of the opportunities to purchase and use today's RCPs. You may be surprised by what you learn.

Increase Comfort Level

Experiment

Given a chance, RCPs will prove their value. You have an opportunity to save money, improve the environment, and perhaps help comply with a buy recycled mandate or policy.

Those wishing to buy RCPs may find the following categories a good place to start: janitorial paper products, recycled latex paint, compost, re-tread tires, re-refined oil, notebooks, and ruled writing

pads. These RCPs are readily available, cost-competitive, and every bit as good as nonrecycled products. Choose a product from a manufacturer or a vendor you already trust. Experiment with the most common RCPs and increase your comfort level.

Experience

Take it one step at a time if RCPs are new to you. Stay with what you know best and as your positive experiences grow, try a new product and/or a new vendor. Brainstorm with other interested people. Get help from the CIWMB's Buy Recycled staff. Before long, you will be making bigger and better RCP purchases from the wide variety of available products. Soon you will find yourself gaining the experience necessary to provide assistance to others.

Network

Share your experiences with others. Some people may have more experience buying RCPs within a specific product category or may know of a reliable vendor. Learn from those around you and try to avoid the few bad apples. Before long, you will experience the value of buying RCPs for all of your needs.

Dispelling the Myths

Price

Many RCPs are less expensive than comparable nonrecycled products. Like any product, the price of RCPs is dependent upon quality, quantity ordered, whether the product is a specialty item or a more common product, etc. Many large corporations are currently manufacturing and selling RCPs. Compare prices and shop around. Today, many companies supply RCPs at very competitive prices.

Quality

Many RCPs are at least as good as nonrecycled products. Today's modern high technology companies and new entrepreneurial companies spend millions of dollars to research materials and test products. RCPs have inherent qualities that result in improved performance characteristics. For

example, the fibers of recycled newsprint curl more easily through the printing presses, and recycled printing and writing papers have increased printability and readability. Re-refined oil meets the same specifications as virgin oil. Plastic lumber lasts longer and requires less maintenance than comparable wood or concrete products.

Availability

Many RCPs are now as easy to find and obtain as other products. With the decrease in price and increase in quality, demand for RCPs is rising rapidly. Your current contractors and vendors can easily obtain RCPs if they are requested to do so. No new business relationships are necessary, although it may be beneficial to investigate additional suppliers. RCPs are now available through supermarkets, discount, retail, and club/membership stores.

A variety of RCP guides are available from State, federal, and local government offices, industry associations, and environmental groups. The CIWMB Buy Recycled staff can help you locate these guides. Check out the CIWMB Web site at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/BuyRecycled/ and find a collection of links to useful resources.

RCP Sources

RCP Database

Request RCPs every time you buy a product. A list of 8,000 RCPs from more than 2,000 RCP suppliers can be found by viewing CIWMB's RCP Database on-line at: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RCP/.

Identify

You may already be buying RCPs without even knowing it. Ask your suppliers to identify the recycled content of the products you are currently buying. Talk to the manufacturers to identify the recycled content of their products.

The CIWMB can provide you with a certification form to be completed by the manufacturer or vendor, to verify the recycled content of their products. Identifying RCPs is a critical first step to procuring them.

Vendors

You do not need new vendors or product suppliers. With the rise in demand for RCPs, supply has followed. Ask your current vendors to substitute RCPs for non-RCPs whenever possible. Tell them you prefer RCPs and that you would like to see more of them.

Maintain Records

Track

Once RCPs are identified, record and track your purchases. Keeping records may help you identify the best RCP purchases to make your dollars stretch. It may also be necessary to maintain RCP purchasing records in order to comply with buy recycled mandates or other policy directives. Other people will be interested in RCP procurement data to help them establish their own buy recycled policies and programs.

Evaluate

Evaluate your RCP purchases regularly. Keeping accurate records will enable you to make adjustments for the following year to take full advantage of the RCP procurement opportunities and make your budget last longer. If RCP procurement data is required for any report or summary, you will be better prepared to recommend increased RCP procurement activities.

For More Information

For more information, visit our Web site at: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/BuyRecycled/.

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 energy costs, Flex Your Power and visit www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html.