

# EPP -- Making It Work At Work

This tip sheet corresponds with Green Star Award Standard #3 – Reduce Solid Waste Disposal. Another useful tool is Chapter 5 in “Becoming a Green Star: A Waste Prevention Guide for Anchorage Businesses.” You can find the guide online in pdf and html format at [www.greenstarinc.org/guideindex.php](http://www.greenstarinc.org/guideindex.php) or request a hard copy from Green Star. Also see Tip Sheets #1 and #22 for more about environmentally preferable purchasing.

## Why Consider Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP)?

Green products are not only better for the environment, they can:

- lower initial purchasing costs,
- lower operating and maintenance costs,
- improve employee health, safety and morale,
- improve company image,
- improve compliance with environmental regulations,
- decrease waste management costs, and
- increase markets for environmentally preferable products and services.

Simply by making different, greener choices when restocking supplies, you and your business can save money, prevent needless use of natural resources and reduce the introduction of harmful and toxic chemicals into both your work environment and the outside environment.



This is true for services as well., including cleaning, pest management, building maintenance and remodeling, printing and copying, landscaping and parking lot maintenance, event planning and other service contracts.

But how can you bring these concepts to life in your workplace? This tip sheet provides some of the tools you will need to make it work at work.

## How to Alter Purchasing Habits

Altering habits at an individual level is much easier than shifting the habits of an entire organization. To begin the shift, establish a responsible team and/or designate an employee, depending on the size of your organization to oversee the efforts. Time and effort will be needed to establish environmentally preferable purchasing policies and practices. Once the program is up and running, green purchasing programs also need to be continuously updated.

### Working Together

In Anchorage, a U-Med “Green District” was established to help organizations in the University/ Medical area of east Anchorage to leverage their powers to make changes, share ideas, etc.

One big challenge for the group is to identify ways to change purchasing habits. The group is looking at copy paper and other larger quantity purchases.

Responsibilities of the green purchasing team should include:

- establishing goals for the EPP program,
- composing a purchasing policy for top-management approval,
- obtaining support from all levels of purchasers,
- working with vendors to identify products and improve packaging options,
- reviewing purchases and researching new products,
- educating employees on purchasing procedures,
- monitoring and publicizing the success of the program and
- re-evaluating goals and policies.

The success of the program should be periodically evaluated including reviews of cost savings, improved health, quality of products and reduced consumption. When creating an environmentally preferable purchasing program, include considerations for employee safety, price, environmental performance, availability, durability and maintenance in purchasing decisions.

Part of the research process involves demonstrating savings even in cases when a product may cost more. Changes in usage patterns through behavior and technology changes can bring costs down and save money overall.

## **Why Create a Purchasing Policy?**

By creating an environmentally preferable purchasing policy (EPPP) your business will take an important step in ensuring employees are consistently purchasing environmentally preferable products. Products your business purchases should meet standards for durability, efficiency and environmental merit and an EPPP roughly sets those standards.

An EPPP demonstrates top-level commitment to “green” purchasing, creates an important level of accountability, distinguishes businesses from their competitors, reduces costs, and educates employees on the importance and value of durable, efficient, environmentally preferable products.

## **What should be in a Purchasing Policy?**

An EPPP formally states your business’ commitment to “green purchasing” and recognizes the impact that purchasing practices have on the environment. A good EPPP should broadly state a commitment to purchasing products with lower environmental impacts, include how cost should be taken into consideration and can outline key environmental factors important to your business. Clear statements for evaluating cost should be included in the EPPP.

Some businesses and government agencies include percentages of higher costs that are acceptable for “green” products. For example, if “green” products only cost 10-15% more, they are preferred over traditional products. Since top-level management should approve an EPPP, it should not include constantly changing specifics.



Save specific product information for an environmentally preferable purchasing guide that supports your EPPP. If you find your EPPP is too general, you may want to update the EPPP with specifics on key environmental factors. For example, in an EPPP you may want to state that employees should only purchase 100% recycled-content paper, but not that employees should purchase “x” paper from “y” supplier.

## **What is an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Guide?**

An environmentally preferable purchasing guide (EPPG) is an internal resource your organization develops to help employees find environmentally preferable products. A purchasing guide can help ensure your employees are purchasing lower-cost, environmentally friendly products, and can support a system of continual improvement.

Your business’ EPPG should include the business’ purchasing policy and outline specific items from your suppliers that meet your environmentally preferable purchasing policy. An EPPG should be easily updatable, and should include supplier contact information, key product information, and notes on key environmental factors and prices. If employees find cheaper products of good quality, which meet the EPPP, systems should be in place for employees to provide feedback to and/or update the guide.

### **Alameda County Waste Management Authority**

Model Environmental Policy (EPPP)  
[www.ciwmb.ca.gov/EPP/LawPolicy/AlaPolicy.doc](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/EPP/LawPolicy/AlaPolicy.doc)

Model Implementation Guide (EPPG)  
[www.ciwmb.ca.gov/EPP/LawPolicy/AlaPollImp.doc](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/EPP/LawPolicy/AlaPollImp.doc)

## **What Makes the Process Work?**

Your green purchasing practices should be promoted both internally and externally. External promotion can include displaying the environmental attributes of the products your business purchases and/or sells, circulating letters to suppliers about your environmental goals, organizing vendor fairs for environmentally friendly products, donating environmentally preferable products to charities and non-profits, providing information about your environmentally preferable purchasing program on your website.

Internal communication may include creating a purchasing policy and guide, hosting workshops and training sessions for employees, including environmental performance in annual reviews, offering staff bonuses, sponsoring competitions between departments and including information in newsletters and e-mails.



5011 Spenard Road, Bldg. A, Suite 204, Anchorage, AK 99517

Phone: (907) 278-7827 ~ Fax: (907) 279-5868

[info@greenstarinc.org](mailto:info@greenstarinc.org) ~ [www.greenstarinc.org](http://www.greenstarinc.org)

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