



Ecopurchasing



Products and Supplies for Ecopurchasing

- Appliances and computers
- Bathroom toilets and sinks
- Carpeting
- Cleaning products
- Electricity
- Fluorescent lamps and lighting
- Food and food/beverage products
- Furniture and furnishings
- Guest supplies: shampoo, soap, etc.
- Heating fuel
- Landscaping products
- Linens
- Office supplies
- Paints and other finishes
- Paper
- Printing services
- Sanitary paper
- Wood for renovation
- Vehicles and transportation services

Your hotel can support the environment and improve efficiency by adopting a purchasing practice known as *ecopurchasing*. Ecopurchasing means choosing products and services that reduce waste, support recycling, and minimize harmful impacts to the Earth's resources.

One obvious example is choosing to purchase paper with recycled content for office needs and hotel printing. Demand for recycled paper spurs manufacturers to use recycled content and creates a market for recycled paper waste, thereby closing the loop on paper recycling efforts. But there are many less obvious products and services your hotel can choose as well.

The central premise of ecopurchasing is the recognition that all products have an economic *and* environmental cost. Though we don't often consider the entire life cycle of a product in our purchasing decisions, there is an economic and environmental cost of materials, manufacturing, labor, transportation, packaging, merchandising, storage, and disposal. By considering the environmental impacts of what we purchase, we can make more informed choices and better protect the environment.

Getting Started

Ecopurchasing is implemented most effectively when a senior manager is given specific responsibility for it. The most appropriate person at your hotel will depend on its corporate structure, but may include: the overall purchasing director, head of accounting, or chair of the environment committee. Larger companies may assign ecopurchasing as a primary job function. A committee or team could also be appointed to oversee ecopurchasing, conduct background research about new products, suggest alternative products, and ensure that ecopurchasing decisions are made by all departments.

Many hotels belong to large chains or ownership groups, and, at least a portion of their purchasing decisions are made at a higher corporate level. Individual hotels will receive credit for ecopurchasing through the Audubon Green Leaf™ Program if it can be demonstrated that the corporate purchasing office has adopted ecopurchasing strategies and practices.



A word about food choices...

Ecopurchasing can extend to your restaurant menu, as well. Selecting locally grown fruit, vegetables, and meats supports local agriculture and ranching, which often helps to protect natural areas and scenic vistas free of charge. In addition, avoiding fish and lobster whose stocks are near depletion or are unsustainably harvested is a good way to reduce the demand for overburdened ocean resources.

Developing a List of Preferred Products

Many manufacturers are already producing and packaging environmentally-preferable products to satisfy a growing “green” business demand. Once an “ecopurchasing coordinator” has been appointed, that individual (or team) should develop a list of preferred products and services, as well as a list of products to avoid.

Ideally, such a list will include products that have had their environmental claims certified by an independent third party (*i.e.*, eco-labelled). The list should also be reviewed on a regular basis and revised if necessary. Take into account the following environmental considerations in your ecopurchasing decisions.

Production/Manufacturing

Raw material inputs for all of the products we use come from natural resources and require energy and water in manufacturing. Products made from recycled materials, such as recycled glass, paper, and plastic, reduce natural resource inputs, often require less energy, and open up markets for waste materials. When possible, choose products made from recycled materials.

Also consider the toxicity of product purchases. Purchase products with less hazardous ingredients and that generate fewer toxic wastes in their manufacture.

Transportation

The farther a product has to travel to reach your hotel, the more pollution it generates. Purchasing locally or regionally produced products supports the local economy and reduces the economic and environmental costs of transportation.

Durability, Efficiency, and Use

Consider the durability and longevity of the products you purchase. Cheap products that don’t last increase waste. The longer a product, such as furniture, electronics, and heavy duty equipment, stays in use, the fewer resources consumed.

At the same time, consider the efficiency of older equipment when considering whether to upgrade. By purchasing newer, more efficient equipment, the hotel may quickly see a return on investment in terms of financial savings and environmental benefits.

Reuse and Recycling

Hotel guest services typically rely upon disposable, one-time-use products, such as shampoo, soap, and cups, that quickly become trash. Look for ways to incorporate alternatives, such as shampoo or soap dispensers, reusable containers, and products that can be recycled.

More than 200 billion bottles, cans, and plastic containers and cups are thrown away worldwide every year. Few hotels have incorporated a recycling program for guests. Begin a recycling program for glass and plastic bottles that includes receptacles in rooms and common areas.



The Audubon Green Leaf™ Eco-Rating Program

is jointly managed by Audubon International and Green Leaf Environmental Communications, Inc.

For more information, please contact

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Disposal

Everything must go somewhere, and, in the case of the things we throw away, that somewhere is to landfills, incinerated into our atmosphere, or dumped in the ocean. Toxic wastes require special transportation, handling, and storage that pose threats to human health and the environment.

Make choices that reduce the amount of hazardous waste generated and reduce waste volume overall. Reduce packaging, increase efficiency, and, when possible, divert useful products from the waste stream through reuse, recycling, or donation.

Support Environmentally Friendly Suppliers

On a final note, you can take ecopurchasing one step further by selecting products and services offered by environmentally-conscious producers, distributors, retailers, vendors, contractors, printers, graphic artists, and other businesses. Choose suppliers that use recycled products; recycle at their business sites; take back packaging; exercise energy and water conservation practices in their operations; and have implemented the use of less hazardous materials in the products they offer and use.



RESOURCES

Center for a New American Dream, <http://www.newdream.org>, provides useful information on *The Conscious Consumer* and *Institutional Purchasing*, as well as other ways to use your power as a consumer to protect the environment and the well-being of people at the other end of the production line.

Ecopurchasing Guide for Hotels and Motels (1993) is available from the University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service and online at <http://www.p2pays.org/ref/02/01784.pdf>.

Energy Star, <http://www.energystar.gov>, is a U.S. government-backed program helping businesses and individuals protect the environment through superior energy efficiency.

Environment Canada's Environmental Choice Program (ECP), www.environmentalchoice.com, identifies a variety of environmentally-preferable products and services.

GreenSeal, www.greenseal.org, partners with the lodging industry to promote environmentally responsible products and practices.

Pollution Prevention Regional Information Center, <http://www.p2ric.org/home.cfm>, provides a quick primer to green purchasing, including background information and a top ten list for getting started. Click on the *Topic Hub* for Green Procurement.

Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center (PPRC), <http://www.pprc.org/pubs/epr/index.cfm>, offers pollution prevention information and works collaboratively with business, government, non-government organizations, and other sectors to promote environmental protection through pollution prevention.