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The Business Case for Buying Green

As Washington State government's demand for environmentally preferable products grows, our state procurement laws need to catch up with the marketplace. The good news is that green products often cost the same or less than non-green products. Green products avoid costs throughout their useful life through savings in energy and water use, employee productivity, maintenance, and durability. Buying green also helps Washington State meet top priorities such as fighting climate change, protecting human health and the environment, and creating jobs.

Green Products Purchased on Washington State Contract in 2008

Green products	Percent already purchased by state agencies	Price difference between green and conventional products	Life cycle cost reductions using greener products.
Remanufactured toner cartridges (RTC)	75%	RTCs are 2.5 times less expensive than new toner cartridges. Savings from purchase of RTC= $7.8 million annually.	Purchasing one RTC saves ½ gallon of oil and keeps about 2.5 pounds of metal and plastic out of landfills.
EPEAT silver or gold certified computers	78%	Equal or better purchase price	Reduces energy demand. Fewer toxic chemicals used in products.
Independent third party certified cleaning products	51%	No difference in purchase price	Eliminates hazardous waste disposal fees. Reduces janitorial injuries and building occupant illnesses related to poor indoor air quality.
100% recycled content office paper	29%	Some variability in purchase price	Creates demand for waste paper and reduces high costs of shipping waste to landfills. Paper reduction efforts can offset any increased costs.
Re-refined oil	5%	No difference in purchase price	Creates a demand for waste oil. Reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Use a life cycle approach to determine costs

Best value in purchasing means examining a product's overall life cycle costs. For example, some flooring tiles may be inexpensive to purchase, but regular stripping, cleaning, and polishing chemicals are required for maintenance. The chemicals plus staff time add up.

Examples of Life Cycle Approach to Avoid Costs

State Agency	Avoided Costs
Department of Corrections Stafford Creek Facility	Replaced 12,000 lamps in their facility with longer life energy efficient bulbs. Each lamp will save more than $10 in energy costs over its lifetime, which adds up to $120,000 for one facility.
Liquor Control Board	Shifted to Motor Pool management of hybrids and saved $59,000 over the last biennium. Paid a portion of their Motor Pool bill for the year from the sale of their fleet.
Department of Transportation	Implemented an Integrated Vegetation Management program which gradually reduced herbicide pounds of active ingredient being applied to the roadside by 70 percent, or almost 90,000 pounds per year less than was applied in 2003.

Buy green to reduce impacts to climate change

Costs related to damage and mitigation efforts from climate change are estimated to reach $3.8 billion by 2020 for Washington State[1]. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, approximately 37 percent of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) are associated with the entire life cycle of non-food products originating in the U.S.[2] In a follow up study by the Public Policy Institute, 44 percent of GHGs are associated with non-food products imported to the U.S.[3] Thus purchasing locally manufactured products eliminates seven percent of GHGs from the manufacturing and transportation of imported products.

Buy green to protect human health and the environment

Reducing toxic threats to our citizens, waterways, and environment is a key aim of green purchasing. Estimated health care costs associated with toxins in the environment were $2.8 billion in 2004 for Washington State and $55 billion nationally[4,5]. Selecting products that do not contain asthmagens, endocrine disruptors, neurotoxins, and carcinogens is the best way to limit exposure.

Buy green to create jobs

Purchasing local products translates into more manufacturing jobs for Washington State and the Pacific Northwest. For example, government demand for recycled content paper has helped create a strong market incentive for Washington paper mills to invest in paper recycling technology and process innovations that create jobs. The recycled paper industry is just one example of jobs created through purchasing products made in the state. New jobs in green chemistry and green manufacturing might follow a boost of government purchasing of these products.

Buy green to conserve natural resources

Green products are often recyclable and made of recycled materials. This reduces the need for raw materials, conserves our natural resources, and reduces waste going to landfills.

Buy green using independent third party certification programs

Using independent third party environmental certification programs is the easiest way to contract for green products and services. Specifying products on state contracts that meet or exceed green standards sends a clear signal to suppliers about the type of products the state wants to purchase. This encourages manufacturers to choose safer chemicals and materials and get their products certified. Model green contract language is often available for products and services where certification programs are not yet established.

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