



EPP Update

Issue 4 | March 1999 ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING

Japan—On the Forefront of the Green Purchasing Movement



Interest in environmental purchasing is not limited to the United States. Japan's Green Purchasing Network (GPN), organized in February 1996, has grown from 73 charter organizations to more than 1,300 members today. Although it is endorsed by the Japanese government, GPN is composed of and run by private sector companies and local government organizations.

GPN's members work through a democratic process to develop environmentally preferable purchasing guidelines for products, which it publishes in

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NACo Kicks Off Environmental Purchasing Project

A new campaign by the National Association of Counties (NACo) is making it easier for local governments to purchase environmentally preferable products. NACo is inviting local governments to join its environmental purchasing project, which is being sponsored by EPA's EPP Program. The project assists counties in locating and selecting cost-effective products and services that emphasize environmental attributes such as the following:

- Reduced exposure to hazardous materials.
- Waste reduction.
- Energy efficiency.
- Resource conservation.

Many local governments are already taking a leadership role in green purchasing, and this program is intended to build on those successes. As part of its campaign, NACo recommends the following activities to increase a county's environmental purchasing efforts:

- Adopt a resolution favoring environmentally preferable products.
- Select a single product category or county department area in which to begin research and product demonstrations.

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Highlights

- Are Biobased Products Environmentally Preferable?
- Environmental Information to be Added to Supply Database
- Pentagon Staff Gives Thumbs Up to EPP Training
- Final Guidance to Result from New Executive Order



Environmental Purchasing In Practice

Beginning with this issue, the *EPP Update* will highlight a variety of different paper types that EPA has determined to have certain positive environmental attributes. Read below to find out about the paper choice for this issue—kenaf. Look to future issues of the *EPP Update* to highlight additional paper types.



This issue of the *EPP Update* is printed on Re:Vision 100 percent recycled paper containing 30 percent kenaf and 30 percent postconsumer fiber. The remaining 40 percent is preconsumer recovered fiber. In addition, it is processed without any chlorine bleaching compounds.

Kenaf is a new, annual row crop grown by farmers in the southeastern United States. As a new crop, kenaf offers farmers a low input, nonfood, and nonfeed cash crop that promotes crop rotation options. Kenaf's fibers can be used to produce a wide range of paper products, and it requires less energy and fewer chemicals to convert to pulp.

This product demonstrates the positive environmental attributes of kenaf fibers. The kenaf used to produce it was kenaf paper that was put through the same recycling processes as traditional wood-based papers. ■

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Environmental Data Books. Currently, GPN has established guidelines for five products and is preparing guidelines for an additional eight products.

GPN's Data Books

GPN's *Data Books* compare specific environmental data for products along the environmental and performance attributes it selects. Its paper *Data Book*, for example, specifies environmental attributes such as recycled content, along with other criteria such as brightness levels, for approximately 200 brand name office paper products. GPN plans to publish *Data Books* for all of the products for which it creates guidelines and update them annually. *Data Book* information also is available on the GPN Web site <www.wnn.or.jp/wnn-eco/gpne/index.html>.

The purpose of the *Data Books* is not to recommend particular products. Rather, the books provide the consumer with a tool to compare and analyze environmental data for every product. GPN leaves the final purchasing decision up to the consumer.

GPN's Principles of Green Purchasing

GPN relies on several general principles to develop the product-specific purchasing guidelines provided in the *Data Books*.

- **Note the environmental impact of a product at all stages of its life cycle.** GPN suggests that consumers purchase a product only after considering its cumulative environmental



load, from processing of raw materials to its ultimate disposal.

- **Select products manufactured and distributed by corporations with an active interest in environmental conservation.** GPN suggests that consumers look for businesses that adopt environmentally sound policies and systems, institute proper environmental management and auditing, disclose environmental information, and conform to environmental laws and regulations.
- **Evaluate products by collecting environmental information on the products, manufacturers, and distributors.** GPN encourages consumers to gather environmental information from a wide range of sources, including product labels, information in catalogs and commercials, GPN purchasing and consumer guides, ecolabel certifications, and third-party assessments.

Selecting Products

In selecting products for which to create guidelines, GPN periodically presents its members with a questionnaire asking them to nominate products. A product task group then evaluates the nominated products based on the product-specific criteria developed using the general principles listed above. GPN staff members then contact all of the manufacturers to obtain product information.

The product task groups draft the product guidelines and the entire GPN membership is provided an opportunity to comment. The final guidelines do not

rank the products, but provide all of the environmental information in a report card-like format to help consumers make an environmentally informed decision.

Successes and Next Steps

To demonstrate the success of Japan's program, consider this fact—a recent survey conducted by GPN shows that more than 40 percent of its membership consults GPN *Data Books* before making purchasing decisions and finds these resources very useful. GPN has sold more than 10,000 copies of the *Data Books*, and receives from 60,000 to 100,000 hits to its Web site each month.

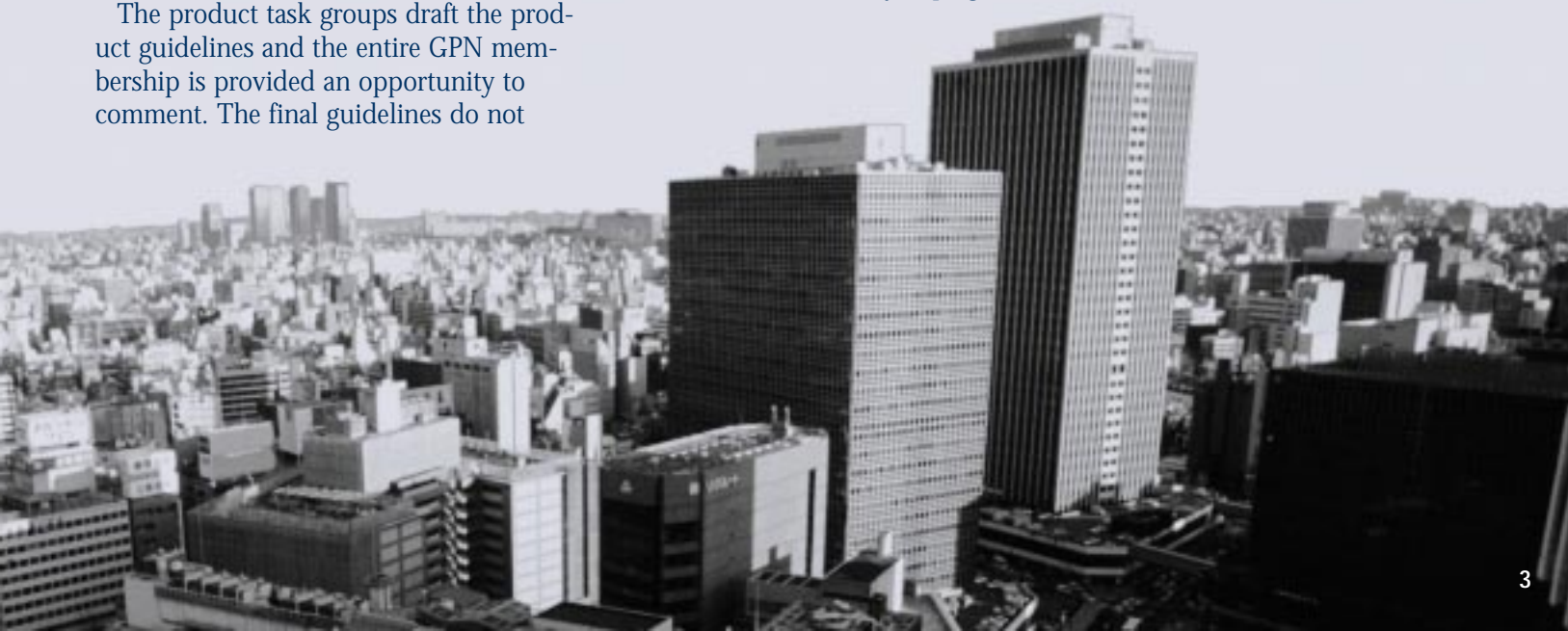
GPN, however, faces challenges similar to those faced by other programs implementing environmentally preferable purchasing. In GPN's membership survey, a frequently mentioned problem was that companies and government bodies have not established the appropriate systems within their own organizations to facilitate the purchase of environmentally preferable products. GPN believes companywide task forces that include environmental and purchasing officials must be established in order for environmental purchasing to flourish. GPN plans to study cases in which such a task force has been developed and present the results in an implementation guideline.

For more information on GPN's efforts, contact Holly Elwood of EPA at 202 260-4362 or <elwood.holly@epa.gov>. ■

Japan's Green Purchasing Network Product Guidelines

- Copier and printing paper.
- Copiers and printers.
- Personal Computers.
- Refrigerators.
- Sanitary paper.
- Air conditioners.*
- Automobiles.*
- Clothing.*
- Light bulbs.*
- Office furniture.*
- Stationary and office supplies.*
- Televisions.*
- Washing machines.*

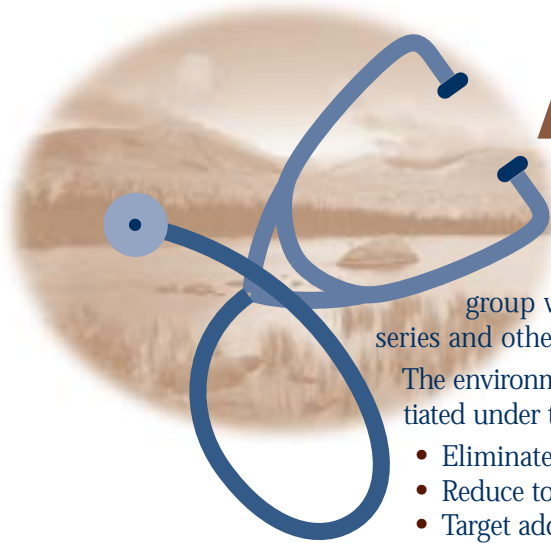
* Future guidelines



What's New?

A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH—

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing in Hospitals



Already in the business of safeguarding human health, many hospitals are now working to protect the environment too. Part of this effort involves a voluntary partnership between the American Hospital Association (AHA), its member hospitals, and EPA. Through this partnership, a work group will focus on environmentally preferable purchasing by investigating hospital products and services that are less harmful to the environment. The work group will then share its findings with all AHA hospitals through a seminar series and other outreach activities.

The environmentally preferable purchasing effort rests with one of 12 work groups initiated under this partnership, which was created to accomplish the following:

- Eliminate nearly all hospital-generated mercury waste by 2005.
- Reduce total hospital waste volume 33 percent by 2005 and 50 percent by 2010.
- Target additional substances for pollution prevention and waste reduction projects.

Accomplishing these goals will make a significant environmental impact, since medical waste incinerators are the country's fourth largest source of mercury releases, and hospitals generate 1 percent of the national municipal solid waste stream. An important early step in the right direction, the adoption of environmentally preferable purchasing principles will help ensure the partnership's success.

For additional details, or to share information with the environmentally preferable purchasing work group, please contact Holly Elwood of EPA at 202 260-4362 or <elwood.holly@epa.gov>. ■

Developing Consensus Standards for Environmental Purchasing

On January 15, 1999, EPA issued a *Federal Register* notice on developing voluntary consensus standards for environmentally preferable goods and services. EPA would like to hear from nongovernmental standard-setting organizations interested in developing environmental standards for use in federal procurement. The Agency also welcomes comments on the use of nongovernmental entities to support

federal environmentally preferable purchasing efforts. Respondents can advise EPA of existing expertise on this subject matter and help identify key sources of environmental information. Comments must be post-marked by March 31, 1999.

For a copy of the notice, visit the EPP Web site at <www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp> or contact Lena Ferris of EPA at 202 260-2237 or <ferris.lena@epa.gov>. ■

Are Biobased Products Environmentally Preferable?

Most of us have heard of ethanol, an alternative fuel made from corn, but what about construction panels made from rice or sorbents made from corn cobs? All three are examples of currently available biobased products. As a result of Executive Order (E.O.) 13101, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is identifying many more biobased products.

In addition to promoting environmentally preferable purchasing, the newly signed E.O. encourages Executive agencies to purchase biobased products if they meet agency needs. The E.O. defines a biobased product as “a commercial or industrial product (other than food or feed) that utilizes biological products or renewable domestic agricultural (plant, animal, or marine) or forestry materials.”

As a result, people are asking, “Are biobased products environmentally preferable?” Biobased products are certainly a good starting point for environmentally preferable purchasing considerations. These products use renewable resources, which

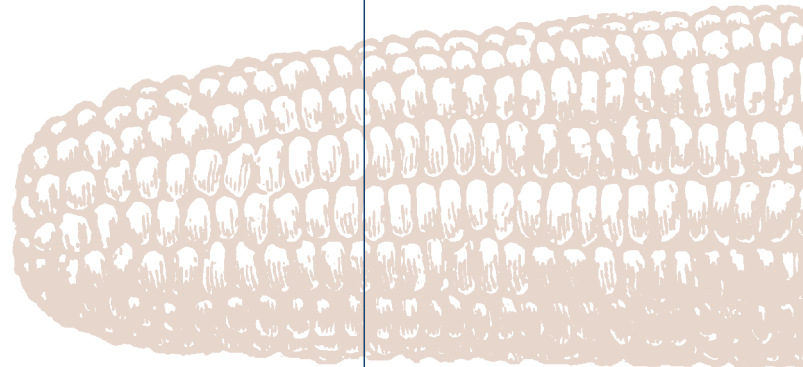
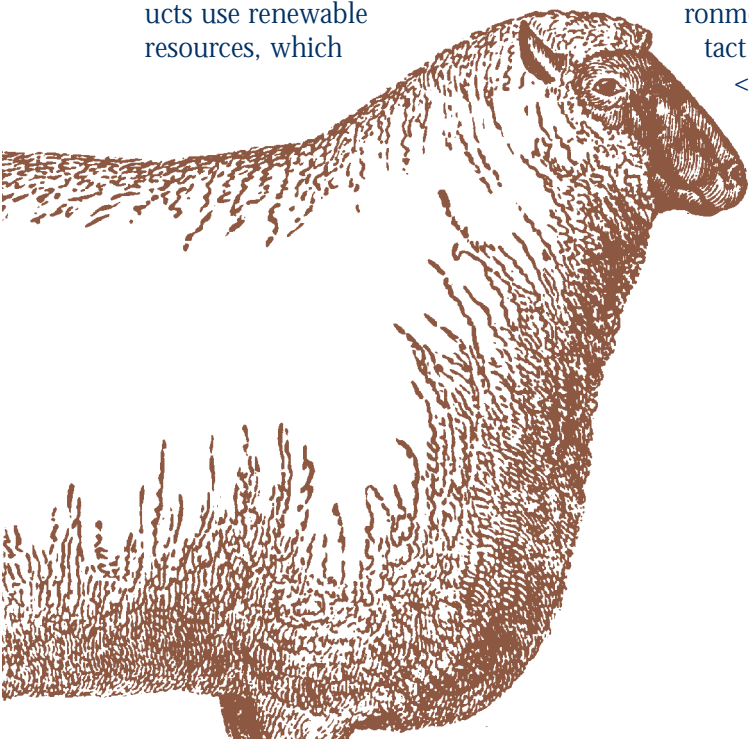
is one of the many positive environmental attributes EPA identified in its proposed EPP guidance. Many biobased products also serve as less toxic alternatives to other products. Thus, biobased products have an advantage over many other items.

Environmentally preferable purchasing, however, emphasizes multiple environmental attributes and lifecycle considerations. Purchasers must remember, therefore, that the full range of environmental impacts for any product, including biobased products, should be evaluated when making purchasing decisions. It is possible, for example, that the pesticides, herbicides, and level of water consumption necessary for some biobased products might outweigh the environmental benefits provided by the products. Environmentally preferable purchasing is a process; it is not an outcome. Consequently, no product or set of products, including those that are biobased, will be environmentally preferable in every situation.

For more information on biobased products and their relationship to environmentally preferable purchasing, contact Eun-Sook Goidel of EPA at <goidel.eunsook@epa.gov>. ■

Biobased Products List

USDA is currently working on a notice of proposed rulemaking regarding its list of biobased products. The notice will propose several categories of products and recommend biobased levels for each. A final rule will be issued after a public comment period.



Environmental Information to be Added to Supply Database

For more information on the effort to incorporate environmental information in FLIS, visit <www.jgenvatt.dla.mil> or contact Nancy Royal-Jones of DLA at 703 767-6256 or George Baden of DLA at 703 767-2617.

In an effort to provide federal agencies with the information needed to make environmental purchasing decisions, a special workgroup is incorporating positive environmental attributes into the Federal Logistics Information System (FLIS), a database of more than 7 million supply items. The multiagency Joint Group on Environmental Attributes (JG-EnvAtt), which was established more than a year ago by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), “hopes to educate consumers about the specific environmental attributes of a product, thereby providing them with additional choices,” said Nancy Royal-Jones of the JG-EnvAtt. “In keeping with EPP guidelines, products will be assigned up to three environmental attributes,” added Royal-Jones.

JG-EnvAtt has established criteria for selecting and approving environmental attributes, which will be incorporated as two-digit alphanumeric codes in FLIS. The selection criteria for an attribute must be a policy priority (i.e., part of federal directives or agency policies); definable (i.e., have standardized definitions and

quantifiable criteria); and show a life cycle cost savings. So far, JG-EnvAtt has identified two environmental attributes to be incorporated in the database—*energy efficiency*, based on the Department of Energy’s “Buying Energy Efficient Products” <www.eren.doe.gov/femp>, and *recycled content*, based on EPA’s Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines <www.epa.gov/cpg>. In addition, JG-EnvAtt is currently evaluating attributes such as the use of biobased materials, water conservation features, low volatile organic compounds, high recycled-content percentages, and minimal greenhouse gas impacts for possible inclusion in FLIS.

Managed by the Defense Logistics Information Service, FLIS currently contains comprehensive data on all of the supply items purchased by the federal government, including National Stock Numbers,

Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) codes, supply sources, item manufacturers, part numbers, prices, packaging and shipping information, and disposal instructions. ■





Pentagon Staff Gives Thumbs Up to EPP Training

A recent, hands-on training session helped Pentagon staff learn about environmentally preferable purchasing and put their knowledge into action. The Department of Defense (DOD) and the EPP Program joined forces to present the training session and help advance DOD's environmental purchasing efforts.

More than 30 building installation and maintenance staff, procurement officers, and contractors attended the 3-hour session. The first part of the training defined environmental purchasing and identified the importance of several environmental attributes such as recycled content, volatile organic compounds content, and other indoor air quality concerns.

A group exercise followed the introduction and enabled trainees to put what they had learned into action. Participants evaluated similar products from three construction product categories—paint, carpet, and ceiling tile. Each group of participants selected the best product in a single product category after considering each product's price, performance, and environmental attributes. After completing their first environmental purchasing decisions, participants presented their choices and justifications at the end of the session.

"This was a totally new concept to me," said John Black of the Pentagon Building Management Office. "I like the idea; I can see the importance and the logic behind it. It's challenging, but it will be easier once industries begin providing the environmental information in an easier-to-read format." ■

"I like the idea; I can see the importance and the logic behind it."

—John Black, Pentagon Building Management Office

EPP Web Site Gets New Look and Feel

You might be surprised the next time you visit the EPP Web site

<www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp/>. Not only does it have a great new look, but several new features also have been added.

The Web site offers a wealth of new information, and you will still find all the material from the previous site, including fact sheets, case studies, success stories, and the interactive Cleaning Products Pilot Project Web page <www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp/cleaners/select/>, which allows a user to rank attributes in order of importance to find an appropriate cleaning product. You also will find the following new interactive features:



- “Share Your Experience” allows users to describe an environmentally preferable case study or other relevant experiences.
- “Share Your Tools” allows visitors to recommend tools that have been helpful in implementing EPP practices. Both suppliers of environmentally preferable goods and those interested in purchasing them are encouraged to identify useful Web sites, guidances, software programs, and other tools to add to EPA’s toolboxes.
- A group e-mail list has been established for those interested in receiving information on EPP pilot projects and announcements pertaining to the Web site. You can join the list via the EPP Web site or by e-mailing <epp.pilot@epa.gov>.
- The bulletin board allows users to post environmental purchasing questions and comments.
- The “Events” page allows visitors to tell us about upcoming events they wish to post on the EPP calendar.

Visit us today and see what the excitement is all about!
<www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp/>

For further information, please contact Chris Kent of EPA at 202 260-3480. ■

Final Guidance to Result from New Executive Order

Released September 14, 1998, Executive Order (E.O.) 13101, "Greening the Government Through Waste Prevention, Recycling, and Federal Acquisition," requires EPA to finalize its guidance on environmentally preferable purchasing. EPA first proposed its *Guidance on the Acquisition of Environmentally Preferable Products and Services* in September 1995, and since then has conducted pilot projects and gathered comments in an effort to develop final guidance, expected to be released this spring.

In addition to ordering final EPP guidance, E.O. 13101 calls for federal agencies to test and evaluate principles and concepts of environmental

preferability through pilot projects using all the options available to them, including the use of the technical expertise of labeling, certification, and standards developing organizations. The E.O. directs agencies to focus their pilots around those product and service categories that have wide use within the federal government. For a more detailed summary of other elements of the E.O., readers are directed to *Closing the Circle News*, Special Issue 1998, which can be found at <www.ofee.gov>.

For more information on the final EPP guidance, contact Eun-Sook Goidel of EPA at <goidel.eunsook@epa.gov>. ■



< NACo - Continued From Page 1 >

- Integrate safer products through consultation with vendors, users, environmental and procurement staff, and other local governments.

NACo launched its campaign in July 1998 during its annual conference in Portland, Oregon. NACo has informational packets on the eight product categories listed to the right as well as a project brochure, all of which are available free of charge. An environmental purchasing "starter kit," currently under development, is expected to be available in April 1999. The kit will include implementation strategies, a model purchasing resolution, fact sheets, and a resource list. The kit also will highlight several counties' environmental purchasing efforts.

NACo wants others to know that many products with environmental features are available without compromising price or performance. According to Randy Franke, county commissioner from Marion County, Oregon, and one

of the speakers at the NACo conference, "By favoring products that are healthier to those who work in our buildings, that do not contribute to water pollution problems, and that use energy more efficiently, we can protect the local and global environment and set an example for the rest of the community."

Counties interested in joining NACo's environmental purchasing project can sign up using the Quick Registration Form located at the NACo Web site at <www.naco.org/programs/environ/purchase.cfm>, filling out the fax/mail-back card in the project brochure, or contacting one of the individuals listed below. Counties do not have to have a demonstration project in mind in order to sign up. To request a copy of the brochure, or if you have questions regarding NACo's efforts, please contact Tony Hayes at 202 942-4247 or <thayes@naco.org>, or Naomi Friedman at 202 942-4262 or <nfriedma@naco.org>. ■

NACo's Product Categories

- Automobile and fleet maintenance and alternative fuel vehicles.
- Cleaners.
- Pesticides and herbicides.
- Office supplies.
- Paint.
- Printing.
- Construction and demolition.
- Green buildings and energy efficiency.

In the Mean

Copying Success

Environmental Attributes Under Consideration for Copiers

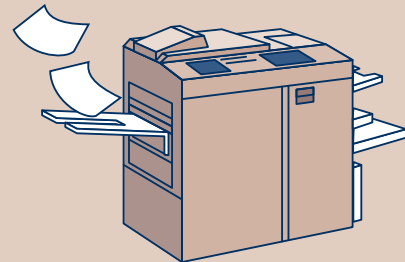
- Highly energy efficient.
- Low emissions of dust and ozone.
- Double-sided copying (as a default to conserve paper).
- Use of recycled materials.
- Recyclability.
- Reduced packaging for shipping.
- Low solvent usage during manufacture and maintenance.
- Minimal maintenance requirements.

EPA is preparing to “green” its photocopiers. With the help of the Office of Administration and Resources Management, as well as EPP Program staff, the Agency is selecting environmental attributes for inclusion in its new photocopier contracts. Some environmental attributes will be mandatory, while others will be optional. Before awarding any contract, EPA will compare all of the vendor bids along its environmental, price, and performance criteria. Vendors who can provide copiers with the optional environmental attributes will score higher when EPA evaluates their bids.

EPA is currently selecting the environmental attributes to include in the contract specifications. A preliminary list has been developed based on the attributes used by other countries, including Japan, Spain, Germany, and Norway, when they purchase copiers. The list also includes information adapted from the standards for copiers developed by environmental certification organizations like Green Seal.

In addition to contract specifications for future procurement, EPA is developing recommendations for improving the environmental performance of the copiers already in use throughout the Agency. The recommendations include methods to increase toner container recycling rates, convert copiers to a double-sided default setting, and promote general user awareness of the environmental impacts of their copier habits. EPA also is examining existing maintenance records in an effort to identify additional environmental improvement opportunities.

For more information on EPA's copier pilot project, contact Toby Wilson at 202 260-4929 or Russell Clark at 202 260-4418. Look for additional information in future issues of the *EPP Update*.



Painting the Town Green

A new pilot project is making it easier to select paints with improved environmental performance. After considering several methods for identifying “green” paint, a Department of Defense (DOD) environmental purchasing team contracted with Green Seal, an environmental certification organization, to help identify the environmental attributes relevant to paint. After selecting the attributes and excluding paints failing to meet the new environmental standards, DOD conducted tests to verify the volatile organic compound levels of the paints meeting the standards.

As a result of the project, the Aberdeen Proving Ground, the DOD facility in Maryland leading the effort, is selecting paint from among 71 products meeting the environmental standards. The paints include flat, semi-gloss, and gloss finishes for interior and exterior applications. The paints are produced by a variety of manufacturers, which helps ensure competitive pricing.

Detailed information on the Aberdeen paint project will be available in a forthcoming EPP case study available in late spring 1999. Check future issues of the *EPP Update* or the EPP Web site

time.

Pentagon Renovation Enlists Environmental Purchasing

At least one general in the U.S. Armed Forces is sitting in a recently renovated Pentagon office built with environmental products. The general's office and more than 100 other similar projects have been completed using construction materials with positive environmental attributes. The projects are part of a recent Department of Defense (DOD) renovation contract that identified specific environmental attributes for more than 300 construction products.

Before awarding the contract, DOD required contractors bidding for the work to submit proposals for researching and incorporating products with the environmental attributes DOD identified. DOD compared the environmental purchasing plans, along with traditional price and performance concerns, when selecting the winning contractor.

In December 1997, DOD awarded the contract to HITT Contracting Inc. The contractor began identifying, selecting,

and using products with recycled content, low toxicity, and other positive environmental features as soon as DOD approved the products.

This is not the first time DOD has incorporated environmental purchasing into a construction contract. DOD contractors are also practicing environmentally preferable purchasing as part of the Pentagon parking lot repair and maintenance contract. (See previous *EPP Updates* or the EPP Web site for additional information.)

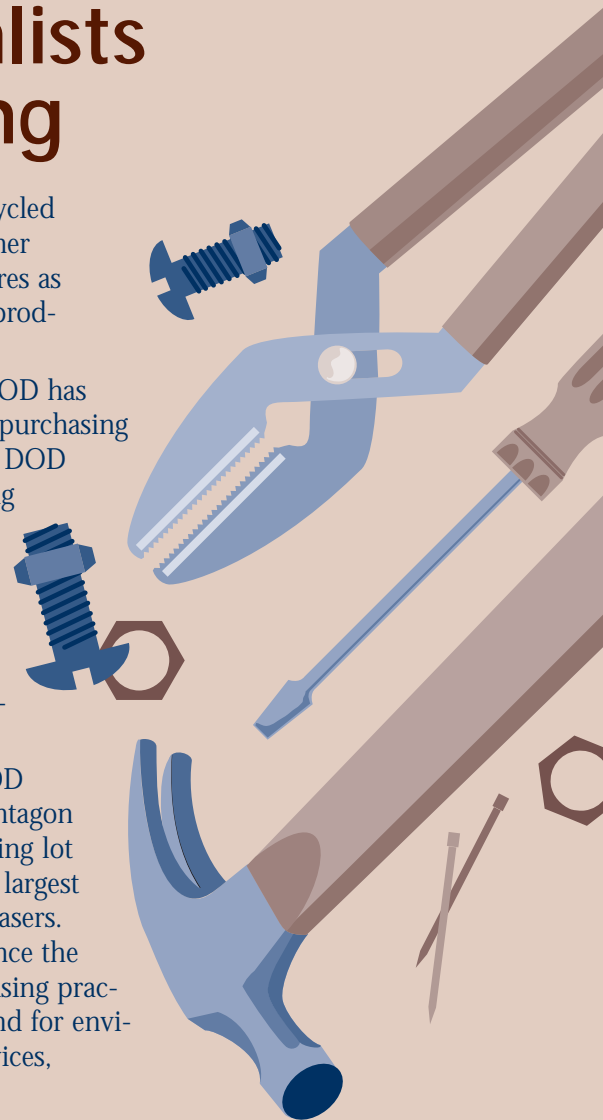
According to Bob Cox, DOD program manager for the Pentagon interior renovation and parking lot projects, "DOD is one of the largest construction products purchasers. Consequently, we can influence the industry through our purchasing practices. If we establish a demand for environmental products and services, industry will respond."

The EPP program is preparing a case study outlining the development of the renovation project, its current progress, and the lessons learned. The case study is expected to be released in spring 1999. Look to future issues of the *EPP Update* or the EPP Web site <www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp> for more information. ■

"DOD is one of the largest construction products purchasers. Consequently, we can influence the industry through our purchasing practices."

— Bob Cox, DOD program manager

<www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp> for additional information or contact Eun-Sook Goidel of EPA at <goidel.eunsook@epa.gov>. ■





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