

PURPOSE

An “eco-label” identifies a product that meets specified environmental performance criteria or standards, and is awarded by a third-party organization to products or services that are determined to meet the criteria or standards. This document provides an overview of eco-labels, including a summary of eco-label programs for electronic products in the U.S. and abroad.

DISCLAIMER

This resource should in no way be interpreted as an endorsement from the Federal Electronics Challenge (FEC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE), of a specific non-governmental entity, organization or program. For more information on how federal purchasers may use the expertise and assistance of such non-governmental programs, please see EPA’s Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program’s Information on Standards for Green Products and Services, at: <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/pubs/guidance/standards.htm>.

UNDERSTANDING ECO-LABELS

“Eco-labeling” is a voluntary approach to environmental performance certification that is practiced around the world. An “eco-label” identifies a product that meets specified performance criteria or standards. In contrast to “green” symbols or claim statements made by manufacturers and service providers, an eco-label is awarded by a third-party organization for products or services that are determined to meet specific environmental criteria. When specifying or purchasing a product that carries an ENERGY STAR® label, for example, the purchaser knows the product meets an energy efficiency standard set by EPA.

Different types of organizations including governments, nonprofit and for profit organizations have developed eco-label programs. The breadth of, and issues addressed by, eco-label programs vary. For example, ENERGY STAR is focused on energy use during equipment operation, while other eco-labels address life cycle environmental concerns and still others cover ergonomic and worker, health and safety issues. Purchasers deciding to utilize eco-labels to assist purchasing decisions should carefully review the criteria to be sure the program reflects their specific concerns.

Environmental performance labels and declarations vary greatly. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has identified three broad types of voluntary environmental labels.

Type I	Voluntary, multiple-criteria based, third party program that awards a license that authorizes the use of environmental labels on products indicating overall environmental preferability of a product within a particular product category based on life cycle.
Type II	Informative environmental self-declaration claims.

Type III	Voluntary programs that provide quantified environmental data of a product, under pre-set categories of parameters set by a qualified third party and based on life cycle assessment, and verified by that or another qualified third party.
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Organizations can use eco-labels or other voluntary environmental performance criteria and verification tools, to inform purchasing decisions and procure “greener” products. For example, eco-labels or certifications may be used as minimum performance criteria in bid specifications or to select between otherwise equivalent products.

Many types of products from paint to paper to electronics are evaluated by eco-labeling organizations worldwide. Many countries have government-sanctioned eco-labeling schemes that include electronics in their labeled products. This document describes some of the most popular eco-labels and similar standards for electronic products.

ELECTRONIC PRODUCT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT TOOL



Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT™)

<http://www.epeat.net/>

EPEAT is the required method of environmental assessment for electronic products for FEC Partners and U.S. federal agencies. EPEAT is a procurement tool designed to help evaluate, compare and select electronic products based on environmental attributes. EPEAT registers products that meet minimum performance standards in multiple categories such as energy efficiency, toxicity reduction, end-of-life product management and corporate responsibility. Random spot checks of the data submitted by vendors verify the accuracy of information provided. EPEAT currently registers computer desktops, laptops, and monitors.

INTERNATIONAL ECO-LABELS

For electronic products not currently registered under EPEAT, federal agencies may consider the environmental standards and eco-labels developed by other organizations for electronic products. These eco-label programs cover a variety of electronic products, including copiers, printers, print cartridges, facsimiles, mobile telephones and televisions.



Canada, EcoLogo^M Program

<http://www.ecologo.org/en/>

The EcoLogo Program certifies products and services based on compliance with environmental criteria focused on the life-cycle impacts of a product or service. The EcoLogo Program requires third-party verification of compliance with the certification criteria.

On the main web page, select “Products & Criteria” from the top menu to view a list of product criteria and vendors of products meeting the criteria. Products include office equipment, paper products and printing services.



European Union, Eco Flower

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/index_en.htm

The European Union Eco Flower is a Europe-wide program that awards eco-labels to products that have been found to have less of an environmental impact than other similar competing products, based on life cycle considerations.

On the main web page, select "Product Groups" and "Appliances" from the menu on the left side for information on personal computers, portable computers and televisions.



Germany, Blue Angel

http://www.blauer-engel.de/englisch/navigation/body_blauer_engel.htm

The Blue Angel program is a voluntary labeling program. For three decades, the Blue Angel label has been awarded to 3,700 products in 80 product and service categories. The Blue Angel is awarded to products and services which are particularly beneficial for the environment in a life cycle consideration and which also fulfill high standards of occupational health and safety and fitness for use.

On the main web page select "Products & Label Users" from the menu on the top. Select "Search for Products" for a product listing that includes computers (personal and portable), office equipment, and mobile phones.



Sweden, TCO Development

<http://www.tcodevelopment.com/>

TCO Development provides certification and environmental labeling of office equipment designed to improve both the work and external environment. Products must undergo independent testing and documentation.

On the main web page, select a language from the drop-down list in the upper right hand corner. TCO groups everything related to computers (e.g., monitors, printers, portable computers) on the main tab "Computers," at the top of the page.



Nordic Swan

<http://www.svanen.nu/Eng/>

The Swan is the official Nordic eco-label and is the collective effort of 5 countries: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland. Products that satisfy strict environmental standards are allowed to display the environmental product label. Companies applying for a license to use the Swan label must provide results from independent testing to prove that criteria are met.

On the main web page, select the "Labelled products" and "Swan-labelled products" from the top menu. Use a text search and drop-down list of product groups to find labeled products, including: computers, office equipment, and printer cartridges.



Japan, Eco Mark

<http://www.ecomark.jp/english/>

The Japan Environment Association develops environmental standards and permits products to bear the Eco Mark symbol. The certification criteria consider environmental impacts throughout the life cycle of each product.

On the home page select "Product Categories (Certification Criteria)" from the top menu. Criteria for electronic products are listed by product category: copiers (117), personal computers (119) and printers (122).



Japan, Green Purchasing Network

<http://www.gpn.jp/English/>

The Green Purchasing Network (GPN) was established to promote green purchasing among consumers, companies and governmental organizations in Japan. The Network is comprised of and governed by a multi-stakeholder group, including government, business, local communities, and non-governmental organizations.

Select "Purchasing Guidelines" from the top menu to view product information for a variety of products and services, including: copiers, televisions, personal computers, printers, and facsimiles.

U.S. PROGRAMS

In addition to EPEAT, there are other U.S. based government programs that provide standards and certifications for electronic products and peripherals, including:



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines

<http://www.epa.gov/cpg/>

The U.S. EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guideline (CPG) program promotes the use of materials recovered from solid waste by designating products that are or can be made with recovered materials and by recommending practices (minimum recycled content) for buying these products.



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, ENERGY STAR®

<http://www.energystar.gov/>

ENERGY STAR is a voluntary partnership between the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. EPA, product manufacturers, local utilities, and retailers, promoting energy efficient products by labeling with the ENERGY STAR logo and educating consumers about the benefits of energy efficiency.



U.S. Department of Energy, Federal Energy Management Program

<http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/>

The Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) provides services to U.S. federal agencies to assist them in reducing the cost of government through energy efficiency, water conservation, and the use of solar and other renewable energy. FEMP designates energy efficient products not covered by ENERGY STAR.



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Database of Environmental Information for Products and Services

<http://yosemite1.epa.gov/oppt/epstand2.nsf>

The Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Database is a searchable database of product-specific information (e.g., environmental standards and guidelines or contract language) developed by government programs, both domestic and international, as well as third parties.

REFERENCES

Information about the Global Eco-labeling Network is available online at:

<http://www.gen.gr.jp>.

Information about ISO 14020, the ISO standard for eco-labels, is available online from the International Organization of Standardization at: <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/prods-services/otherpubs/iso14000/index.html>.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions related to this resource or need other assistance with the Federal Electronics Challenge, please contact your Regional Champion. The list of FEC Regional Champions is available at <http://www.federalectronicchallenge.net/champions.htm>.

Partners may also request technical assistance via email to partner@electronicschallenge.net.

FEDERAL ELECTRONICS CHALLENGE

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