



Green Purchasing Guidelines

Virginia's natural resources and environment are the Commonwealth's most important assets. The Commonwealth's fields, forests, streams, and rivers safeguard clean water and air, and should be preserved for future generations to come. The Green Purchasing Guidelines aligns with George Mason University's value of being careful stewards by managing the economic and natural resources entrusted to it responsibly and sustainably. (Refer to Mason's 2014-2024 Strategic Plan)

To achieve that goal, Mason may give preference to products and services that are locally produced, certified by a third-party certification program, and/or are Small, Woman-owned, and Minority-owned businesses (SWaM).

The Office of Sustainability is responsible for tracking and reporting on Mason's progress on a regular basis.

ENERGY

Guideline: In order to support the University's climate neutrality goals, purchasers will purchase or lease energy efficient products, such as ENERGY STAR, EPEAT, or Federal Energy Management Program certified products. (Refer to University Policy 1142 for more information)

Guideline: When purchasing vehicles, the University should acquire fuel efficient vehicles, such as those that adhere to CAFÉ standards, or less-polluting alternatives to gasoline or diesel fuel. Alternative fuels should be considered when the life cycle greenhouse gas emissions associated with the production and consumption of the alternative fuel is less than the emissions from an equivalent conventional fuel. Alternatives include compressed natural gas, bio-based fuels, hybrids, electric batteries, and fuel cells.

WATER

Guideline: The University should purchase water-efficient products whenever available, such as WaterSense certified products. (Refer to University Design Manual for more information)

GREEN CLEANING

Guideline: Whenever practical, cleaning solvents should be biodegradable, phosphate-free and citrus-based where their use will not compromise quality of service such as Green Seal or Safer Choice certified products. (Refer to University Design Manual for more information).

TOXINS & POLLUTION PREVENTION

Guideline: Whenever possible, avoid the purchase and use of substances that contain carcinogens, mutagens, or teratogens. If no sufficient alternative exists, substances are subject to a full OSHA assessment (refer to OSHA permissible exposure limits).

Guideline: All products and equipment purchased should not contain lead or mercury. When unavoidable, preference should be given to those products with lower quantities of these metals and to vendors with established lead and mercury recovery programs.

BIO-BASED PRODUCTS

Guideline: Bio-based plastic products that are biodegradable and compostable, such as bags, food and beverage containers, and cutlery, should be acquired by the University and /or used by our contractors whenever practicable.

Guideline: All wood based products that the University purchases should be certified as sustainably harvested by a comprehensive, performance based certification system, such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), or its equivalent. Purchase of previously used or salvaged wood and wood products is encouraged whenever practicable. The use of tropical hardwoods should be avoided. (Refer to University Design Manual for more information)

RECYCLED MATERIAL & WASTE REDUCTION

Guideline: At a minimum, 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper should be used for all applications where quality of service is not compromised. When recycled paper cannot be purchased, preference should be given to the most environmental friendly alternative.

Guideline: Copiers and printers purchased should be compatible with the use of recycled products and double-sided printing. To the extent possible, all documents by the University should be defaulted to double-sided printing to reduce the use and purchase of paper.

Guideline: Suppliers of electronic equipment should have take-back equipment programs for reuse or environmentally safe recycling. Suppliers of office materials should provide recycling options for ink cartridges and toners.

Guideline: Products that are durable, long lasting, reusable or refillable are preferred whenever feasible. All University offices should avoid buying one-use products, such as, coffee cups, water bottles, plastic cutlery, and dishware, for daily use or events.

Guideline: Whenever practical, the availability of packaging that is reusable, recyclable or compostable should be considered when choosing a supplier. Packaging should be eliminated or minimized to the greatest extent practicable.

GREEN BUILDING

Guideline: Purchases related to new building construction, as well as renovation and remodeling of a certain size, should contribute to meeting the minimum certification of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver or its equivalent for the building. (Refer to University Design Manual for more information)

LANDSCAPING

Guideline: All landscape renovations, construction, and maintenance performed by internal staff members or contractors should employ best management practices to preserve the integrity of the local watershed. All landscaping activities and purchases must comply with the University's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program, its Nutrient Management Plan, and the Chesapeake Bay Action Plan.

Guideline: Vendors that use an integrated pest management program should be given preference when contracting for services.

Guideline: Native and drought-tolerant plants that require no or minimal watering, once established, should be given preference when purchasing. (Refer to University Design Manual for more information)

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