

Minnesota paper recycling success stories

Minnesota has a vibrant recycling economy because of infrastructure investments made by private industry, waste haulers and communities.



Where old boxes become new again

Every year, Liberty Paper takes in 275,000 tons of old corrugated cardboard boxes that would otherwise head to landfills and recycles that cardboard into new products, including paper and the linerboard that makes up the inside and outside layers of a box. Recycling all that cardboard keeps it out of landfills and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

This business of paper recycling has taken place in Becker, Minnesota, for more than 100 years and supplies recycled products to a wide range of companies, from small businesses to Fortune 500. It also employs more than 2,000 people, leading Liberty Paper to recognition as one of the state's top employers.

Anoka County Recycling & Resource Solutions

The solid waste and recycling unit in Anoka County has committed to purchasing 100% recycled content paper in their communications and educational messaging to residents and businesses. This commitment is a result of the County's goal to help sustain local recycling markets and the many municipal run recycling centers within the county.

In addition to specifying 100% recycled content in their own printed publications (such as the pictured recycling guide), they also encourage their municipalities to do the same when mailing printed publications to residents and businesses.



Is paper really getting recycled?

Absolutely! Paper and other materials collected for recycling in Minnesota are recycled and turned into new products. State law requires recyclables to be recycled.

State and local governments are even required by state law to purchase recycled content paper to close the recycling loop.

Minn. Stat. § 115A.553 **COLLECTING AND TRANSPORTING RECYCLABLE MATERIALS.**

Subdivision 1. Collection centers and transportation required. Each county must ensure alone or in conjunction with other counties that materials separated for recycling are taken to markets for sale or to recyclable material processing centers.

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Minn. Stat. §16C.073 **PURCHASE AND USE OF PAPER STOCK; PRINTING.**

Subdivision. 2. Purchases. (a) Whenever practicable, a public entity shall: (2) purchase recycled content copy paper with at least 30 percent post-consumer material by weight and purchase printing and office paper with at least ten percent post-consumer material by weight.

Support Minnesota businesses — Buy recycled paper

Successful recycling is dependent on end markets for our recyclables to be made into new products. Buying recycled content products is the final link in the chain and can be overlooked. The recycling economy has big impacts on Minnesota; when making paper purchasing decisions in your organization be sure to request at least 30% recycled content to help support recycling in our state.



Recycling contributes to the economy

Recycling helps support local markets and businesses in Minnesota — approximately 78,000 jobs statewide! These jobs pay an estimated \$8 billion in wages and add nearly \$23.9 billion to Minnesota's economy.



Cost of not recycling

Over 1 million tons of recyclable material are thrown away each year, but could easily be recycled for an additional estimated value of \$138 million and create 16,000 new jobs. Instead, it costs Minnesota millions of dollars to throw it away into landfills.



Recycling protects our environment

Recycled content paper uses 75% less energy to produce than virgin paper. Since it takes less energy to manufacture products from recycled materials than it does to manufacture the same product from virgin (new) materials, recycling decreases demand for fossil fuels and increases our energy independence.



Reduced greenhouse gas emissions

Recycling uses less energy which directly decreases greenhouse gas emissions and reduces Minnesota's carbon footprint. Also, recycling has indirect benefits in fighting climate change: Take paper recycling — each mature tree we don't cut down can filter up to 60 pounds of pollutants and carbon dioxide out of our air each year.



Reduced water consumption

Recycling and buying recycled products helps keep Minnesota's lakes and rivers clean. Manufacturing products from recycled materials generates significantly less water pollution than manufacturing from new materials. Manufacturing recycled white office paper creates 74% less air pollutants and 35% less water pollutants than making it from virgin (new) wood pulp. Using recycled content paper in your restrooms and offices can help your organization reach sustainability goals as well.

It takes about 75% less energy to produce recycled content paper compared to virgin paper.



Buying recycled content paper products can help your organization reach sustainability goals.

Tips for a successful recycled paper purchasing effort

Many local and state government agencies have been successful at environmentally preferable purchasing. Their experience offers good ideas that can be tried in your organization to expand purchase of environmentally preferable products, including recycled paper products. Decide what fits your organization and its culture, and see what you can accomplish!

- **Make a commitment.** Adopt a resolution—see the document *Building a Buy Recycled Products Resolution* elsewhere in this toolkit. Create a policy—see “Creating an effective purchasing policy” below.
- **Form a sustainable purchasing team** to champion the work. Involve key stakeholders and decision-makers. Broad involvement creates more buy-in. Bringing in more perspectives and experiences helps to surface potential pitfalls and possible solutions. Sharing the workload keeps things moving forward.
- **Target key paper products** for the “buy recycled” effort. This can give people something specific to rally around. It’s helpful to build on smaller successes and expand into more products. For example, upgrading from 30% recycled content copy paper to 100% is an action that is readily available to most any organization. See the document *Recycled Paper Product Contracts and Specifications* elsewhere in this toolkit for ideas of products to focus on.
- **Identify those already on board and those who need engagement.** It helps to know which departments are buying recycled paper products already, and which could start or do more. Those who are successfully using recycled products can help others who may be unfamiliar or skeptical of change feel more comfortable about giving them a try. It also helps to focus attention where changes can have the biggest impact.
- **Learn from others how to overcome barriers** to buying and using recycled paper products. See “Busting Myths” below for some ideas that have worked for others.
- **Check out state contracts** that feature recycled copy paper and other paper products. See the document *Recycled Paper Product Contracts and Specifications* elsewhere in this toolkit.



Visit www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/purchasing-resources-for-government for more information.

Creating an effective purchasing policy

Generally, a good sustainable purchasing policy will:

- Set out a clear statement of purpose to put the effort on solid ground.
- Include goals to point the way to success.
- Provide guidance and expectations so people know what to do, and outline a path for implementation to help them get there more easily.
- Connect to existing mandates and policies in your organization to motivate buy-in and strengthen implementation.
- Take advantage of established product standards and certifications to make the job of selecting environmentally preferred products much easier.
- Clarify responsibilities and decision-making authority to embed the effort in your organization.
- Establish accountability and reporting mechanisms to keep the effort vital and track how well the effort is working.

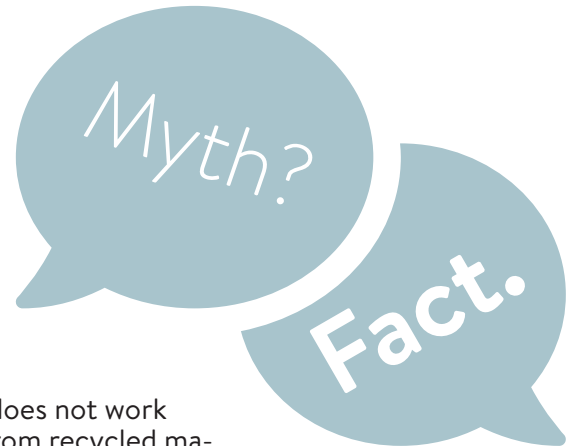
The MPCA offers helpful guidance on how to go about creating an effective sustainable purchasing policy. Visit www.pca.state.mn.us and search **purchasing policy** for more details.

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Busting myths and other strategies to build support

Habits can be hard to break — even harder if people have misconceptions about recycled products or have had bad experiences with inferior products. It is important to meet people where they're at, provide reliable and solid information and demonstrate that a recycled product can be the right choice. Here are some strategies to help get there.

- **A recycled product cannot be an inferior choice.** Make it clear that a recycled product must meet specific and realistic performance needs, be readily available, and be cost-competitive, just like a non-recycled product.
- **Don't let one disappointment stop the effort.** If a product does not work out, it may have nothing to do with the fact that it is made from recycled material. Just like with non-recycled products, quality can vary significantly. Keep looking for a recycled product that DOES work for you. For example, some recycled-content sanitary tissue products are softer, stronger, and more absorbent than others.
- **A recycled product must be cost-competitive.** Some recycled products cost less than their non-recycled counterpart. Others cost more. Shop around if you're not finding a recycled product at the price point you need.
- **Be open minded.** Leave some room for experimentation, some trial and error.
- **Level the playing field for product performance.** Take an objective look at performance specifications and requirements. Decide which ones matter and which ones are really not that important to getting the job done. For example, avoid letting aesthetic preferences prejudice you against trying a product that can otherwise function very well for you.
- **Ask for what you are really looking for.** In a "low bid" process, avoid simply stating a product or functional category is what you are looking for. Instead, cite recycled content as a required attribute of the desired product in your specification. For example, instead of a bid request for "copy paper," request "recycled copy paper with at least 30% post-consumer recycled content."



Building a buy recycled products resolution

Below are clauses that can be included in a resolution to be adopted by the governing body for your organization to support buying recycled products, particularly paper products. The clauses are meant to be a menu of suggestions that can be selected and/or amended as appropriate to your organization.

Whereas, *[organization name]* is committed to ensuring a healthy environment for residents, visitors, employees and businesses; and

Whereas, procurement decisions can support environmental conservation and reduction of environmental impacts of products and demonstrate responsible stewardship of public funds; and

Whereas, recycled content products are produced in ways that reduce energy, water and natural resource use; and

Whereas, many recycled content products can meet or exceed the performance of their non-recycled content counterparts, often at similar or lower cost; and

Whereas, environmental considerations should be a part of normal purchasing decisions, consistent with standard practices such as safety, price, performance and availability; and

Whereas, public entities can use their purchasing power to increase demand for high-quality, price-competitive recycled content products, strengthening markets for materials collected in recycling programs that serve residents and businesses in our community; and

Whereas, Minnesota Statute 16C.073 establishes public entity procurement requirements and guidelines on environmentally preferable purchasing practices, including for recycled content paper and other products; and

Whereas, the Minnesota Department of Administration has established contracts for various recycled content products that are available to local units of government through the Cooperative Purchasing Venture program; and

Whereas, the U.S. EPA in coordination with federal purchasing agencies has established Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines to assist federal agencies and others in purchasing recycled content products.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, *[organization name]* chooses to lead by example in purchasing recycled content products for its operations, building projects and other endeavors. And,

Be It Further Resolved, *[organization name]* adopts a Buy Recycled Policy that requires all departments to meet minimum statutory requirements for purchase of recycled content products and any other requirements as established by *[responsible office/department in organization]*. And

Be It Further Resolved, *[organization name]* encourages all departments to exceed the minimum requirements of the Buy Recycled Policy by purchasing additional types of recycled content products and products with recycled content higher than required. And,

Be It Further Resolved, *[organization name]* commits to comply with the requirements for public entities in Minnesota Statutes 16C.073 subd. 2 regarding the purchase of paper products, including the purchase of 30% post-consumer content copy paper and 10% post-consumer recycled content printing and office paper. And,

Be It Further Resolved, *[organization name]* commits to exceed statutory requirements on copy paper purchasing and will choose 100% post-consumer content copy paper whenever possible. And,

Be It Further Resolved, *[organization name]* strives to comply with federal Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines for purchase of recycled content products, including paper products for office, printing, food

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service and cleaning and janitorial uses, as well as products made from a variety of recycled materials for office, construction, landscaping, outdoor furnishings and transportation applications. And,

Be It Further Resolved, *[organization name]* will seek products that are easily recyclable and readily marketable through the recycling programs in our community. And,

Be It Further Resolved, all departments of *[organization name]* shall identify and work to overcome barriers to the purchase of recycled content products, such as exclusionary specifications, unwarranted expectations about product requirements, outdated information about recycled content product performance or price-competitiveness or lack of familiarity with recycled content product options. And,

Be It Further Resolved, all departments of *[organization name]* shall examine contracts offered through the Minnesota Cooperative Purchasing Venture for opportunities to cost-effectively procure recycled products. And,

Be It Further Resolved, nothing in this resolution shall be construed as requiring purchase of products that do not perform adequately or are not available at a reasonable price in a reasonable amount of time. And,

Be It Further Resolved, the *[responsible office/department in organization]* shall report back to *[governing body]* on progress in meeting the terms and goals of this *[resolution, policy]* by *[date]*. And,

Be It Further Resolved, *[organization name]* encourages other businesses and organizations in *[jurisdiction]* to join *[organization name]* in similar efforts to expand the purchase of recycled content products. And,

Be It Further Resolved, *[organization name]* encourages residents of *[jurisdiction]* to identify and purchase recycled content products that meet their needs.

Recycled paper product contracts and specifications

Local government can take advantage of existing state contracts to source recycled content paper products. Local government also does not have to start from scratch in deciding what recycled content percentages to specify when purchasing recycled paper products. The federal government has created recycled content guidelines that reflect what is widely available in the marketplace, readily adaptable to any local government needs.

State of Minnesota contracts that include recycled content paper products

Over 1,700 Minnesota cities, counties, school districts and other public entities are members of the [Cooperative Purchasing Venture](#) (CPV) through the Minnesota Department of Administration's Office of State Procurement. Members are able to purchase a wide array of products from state contracts. Several state contracts open to CPV members feature recycled content paper products. Here is a list of those contracts.

P-661(5) Industrial paper products: tissue, towels, napkins, and wipers

O-86(5) Office Supplies

P-942(5) Cut sheet paper (copy/printer)

P-741(5) Printing and Business Paper

P-707(5) Printed Envelopes: Plain, Window, and Kraft

Federal Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG)

The [Comprehensive Procurement Guideline \(CPG\) program](#) administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency supports efforts to use recycled content materials by federal agencies and others. Recommendations for minimum levels of recycled content that buyers should look for are spelled out for a wide array of products.

Various office and janitorial paper products are listed below with recommended minimum recycled content. A range of percentages is provided when EPA recognizes that higher content levels are not universally available across the U.S. In these cases, EPA recommends an organization seek availability of products at the highest end of the range and set the organization's minimum percentage standard accordingly, based on what is reasonably available.

Copy paper: 30% post-consumer minimum, strive for 100% post-consumer.

Writing paper, notepads: 30% post-consumer minimum, strive for higher.

Printing paper, coated: 10% post-consumer minimum, strive for higher.

Envelopes: 10-30% post-consumer minimum, depending on type of envelope.

Letterhead, stationery: 30% post-consumer minimum, strive for higher.

File folders, supplies: 30% post-consumer minimum for folders, 20% post-consumer minimum for other filing products.

Paper towels: 40-60% post-consumer minimum.

Napkins: 30-60% post-consumer minimum.

Bathroom tissue: 20-60% post-consumer minimum.

Facial tissue: 10-15% post-consumer minimum.

General purpose wipers: 40% post-consumer minimum.

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Certification programs

One shortcut to identifying environmentally preferable products is to rely on a trusted third-party certification system. Two commonly used certification systems are Green Seal and the Underwriter's Laboratory's (UL) ECOLOGO program. Products that meet program certification standards can bear the program's logo and are listed in the certification system's database of certified products.



Green Seal can be used by those whose products meet the GS-7 standard for printing and writing papers or the GS-1 standard for sanitary paper products (bathroom tissue, facial tissue, paper towels, napkins and placemats). Green Seal certified products can be identified in the Green Seal [Directory of Certified Products & Services](#).



UL ECOLOGO can be used by those whose products meet the UL 2771 standard for printing, office and fine papers or the UL 175 standard for sanitary paper products (toilet tissue, facial tissue, table napkins, kitchen towels, and hand towels). UL certified products can be identified in the [SPOT product database](#).

Minnesota statutory requirements on purchase and use of recycled paper

Minnesota has had a statute for several decades that calls for public entities to purchase recycled content copy and printing paper, among other environmentally preferable purchasing and paper use practices. The law was amended in 2015 to increase the minimum recycled content requirement to 30% for copy paper. The full text of the statute is provided here for reference.

Minn. Stat. § 16C.073, Purchase and Use of Paper Stock; Printing

www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/16C.073

Subdivision 1. Definitions.

- (a) The definitions in this subdivision apply to this section.
- (b) “Copier paper” means paper purchased for use in copying machines.
- (c) “Office paper” means notepads, loose-leaf fillers, tablets, and other paper commonly used in offices.
- (d) “Postconsumer material” means a finished material that would normally be discarded as a solid waste, having completed its life cycle as a consumer item.
- (e) “Practicable” means capable of being used, consistent with performance, in accordance with applicable specifications, and availability within a reasonable time.
- (f) “Printing paper” means paper designed for printing, other than newsprint, such as offset and publication paper.
- (g) “Public entity” means the state, an office, agency, or institution of the state, the Metropolitan Council, a metropolitan agency, the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District, the legislature, the courts, a county, a statutory or home rule charter city, a town, a school district, another special taxing district, or any contractor acting pursuant to a contract with a public entity.
- (h) “Soy-based ink” means printing ink made from soy oil.
- (i) “Uncoated” means not coated with plastic, clay, or other material used to create a glossy finish.

Subdivision 2. Purchases.

- (a) Whenever practicable, a public entity shall:
 - (1) purchase uncoated copy paper, office paper, and printing paper;
 - (2) purchase recycled content copy paper with at least 30 percent postconsumer material by weight and purchase printing and office paper with at least ten percent postconsumer material by weight;
 - (3) purchase copy, office, and printing paper which has not been dyed with colors, excluding pastel colors;
 - (4) purchase recycled content copy, office, and printing paper that is manufactured using little or

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no chlorine bleach or chlorine derivatives;

(5) use reusable binding materials or staples and bind documents by methods that do not use glue;

(6) use soy-based inks;

(7) purchase printer or duplication cartridges that:

(i) have ten percent postconsumer material; or

(ii) are purchased as remanufactured; or

(iii) are backed by a vendor-offered program that will take back the printer cartridges after their useful life, ensure that the cartridge is recycled, and comply with the definition of recycling in section 115A.03, subdivision 25b;

(8) produce reports, publications, and periodicals that are readily recyclable; and

(9) purchase paper which has been made on a paper machine located in Minnesota.

(b) Paragraph (a), clause (1), does not apply to coated paper that is made with at least 50 percent postconsumer material.

(c) A public entity shall print documents on both sides of the paper where commonly accepted publishing practices allow.

Subdivision 3. Public entity purchasing.

(a) Notwithstanding section 365.37, 375.21, 412.311, or 473.705, a public entity may purchase recycled materials when the price of the recycled materials does not exceed the price of nonrecycled materials by more than ten percent. In order to maximize the quantity and quality of recycled materials purchased, a public entity also may use other appropriate procedures to acquire recycled materials at the most economical cost to the public entity.

(b) When purchasing commodities and services, a public entity shall apply and promote the preferred waste management practices listed in section 115A.02, with special emphasis on reduction of the quantity and toxicity of materials in waste. A public entity, in developing bid specifications, shall consider the extent to which a commodity or product is durable, reusable, or recyclable and marketable through the applicable local or regional recycling program and the extent to which the commodity or product contains postconsumer material. When a project by a public entity involves the replacement of carpeting, the public entity may require all persons who wish to bid on the project to designate a carpet recycling company in their bids.