

State Agencies and Sustainable Purchasing

The State of North Carolina's Department of Administration, Division of Purchase and Contracts' "AGENCY PURCHASING MANUAL" (effective Aug. 1, 2000) includes requirements of all state agencies regarding environmentally sustainable purchasing. Its sustainability topics cover buying recycled products, purchasing for waste reduction, environmentally preferable goods and services, and recyclable materials.

Buying recycled products

"It is the policy of the State to encourage and promote the purchase of products with recycled content. All agencies shall, to the extent economically practicable, purchase and use, or require the purchase and use of, products with recycled content." (Department of Administration, Purchase and Contract purchasing manual, Section X, Page 1). In fact, all state agencies are required to report annually to the Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance regarding the amounts and types of materials and supplies with recycled content purchased during the year, and on the progress made in reaching the goals for buying recycled paper and paper products.

Purchasing for waste reduction

"The Department of Administration, Division of Purchase and Contract, shall review and revise its competitive procedures and specifications to encourage the purchase or use of reusable, refillable, repairable, more durable, and less toxic supplies and products." (DOA P&C Purchasing Manual, Section X page 2). The Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance is available to assist any departmental employee or state agency determine effective waste reduction practices.

Environmentally preferable goods and services

"All agencies shall give consideration to environmentally preferable products that are more energy efficient, less toxic, less polluting, and which generate less waste overall." (Department of Administration, Division of Purchase and Contract section X, page 2). Examples of this practice include avoiding unnecessary printing or photocopying of printed materials, the double-sided photocopying of documents when feasible, and purchasing photocopiers and laser printers with duplexing capabilities.

Recyclable materials

State agencies across North Carolina have solid waste reduction programs in place to recycle materials such as aluminum cans, plastic bottles and newspapers. The Department of Administration, Division of Purchase and Contract's purchasing manual states: *"Agencies that have a solid waste reduction program, as defined in G.S. 130A-309.14, shall be eligible to retain receipts derived from the transfer or sale of recyclable material, less any charge or fee collected for the transfer or sale by the Division of State Surplus Property. An Agency shall have a solid waste reduction program in place at the time the recyclable material is designated as surplus property to be eligible to retain such funds. The funds may only be used to defray the costs of the agency's solid waste reduction program. If an agency with a solid waste reduction program elects to retain such funds, the agency shall certify in writing to the Division of State Surplus Property that they have such a program in place."* (Department of Administration Purchasing Manual, Division of Surplus Property, Section XIII-1, Page 4)

A “green” or sustainable product should not be purchased or used, unless it meets required standards and specifications. The most sustainable purchase decision is not to purchase something unless it does the job as required. In state government, purchasing the cheapest, most stripped down product could result in poor or no performance at all. This is one of the main reasons North Carolina government information technology (computer-related) purchases are subject to “Best Value Legislation.” ([ITS Purchasing Manual, Section IV, Page 15](#)).

In addition, state agencies are also subject to Executive Order Number 156, “State Government Environmental Sustainability, Reduction of Solid Waste, and Procurement of Environmentally Preferable Products,” which covers the three major sustainability areas, including Use of Environmentally Preferable Products area. This requires agencies to “*purchase and use environmentally preferable goods and services, including products made wholly or in part from recycled materials, whenever feasible and practicable. Environmentally preferable products are those that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment in their manufacture, use and disposal when compared with other products that serve the same purpose. All agencies shall give consideration to environmentally preferable products that are more energy efficient, less toxic, less polluting and which generate less waste overall.*”

For many years Department of Environment and Natural Resources folks have shown resourcefulness and common sense in making environmentally friendly and sustainable purchases as required by state laws, executive orders and the Department of Administration purchasing manual. Sometimes however, a lack of information, lack of time, and/or restrictive state rules hamper the location of “best value” purchases. Purchasing information can be found at the following Internet addresses:

Department of Administration
Division of Purchase and Contract Purchasing manual
<http://www.doa.state.nc.us/PandC>

Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Division of Purchase and Services Purchasing Manual
<http://www.admin.enr.state.us.purchase/index.html>

Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance
Assistance developing environmentally sustainable policies and products
<http://www.p2pays.org>

North Carolina State Government
Executive Order Number 156
Available on the N.C. Project Green Web site
<http://www.sustainablenc.org/main/orders.htm#156>

Information Technology Services
Best Value Practices
<http://www.its.state.nc.us/About/AboutITS.asp>