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Pollution Prevention and Toxics (7409)



Environmentally Preferable Products Proposed Guidance



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Environmentally Preferable Products

Proposed Guidance for Implementing Executive Order 12873, Section 503

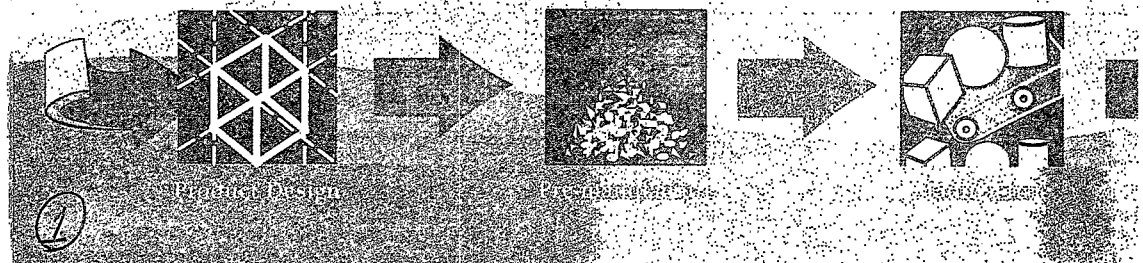
The federal government is committed to minimizing the environmental impact of the products and services that it purchases.

Spending \$200 billion annually, the federal government can apply its purchasing power to create a demand for products and services that have a reduced impact on the environment.

In order to identify and show a preference for "environmentally preferable" products and services, President Clinton has called upon EPA to issue guidance for executive agencies to use when purchasing goods and services.

"Environmentally preferable" products and services have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared to other products and services that serve the same purpose.

Executive Order 12873
Federal Acquisition, Recycling,
and Waste Prevention
Sections 201 & 503
October 20, 1993



Who Needs to Know About EPA's Proposed Guidance?

- All parties buying products and services for the federal government.
- All parties using products and services purchased by the federal government.
- All parties providing products and services to the federal government.
- Federal contractors.

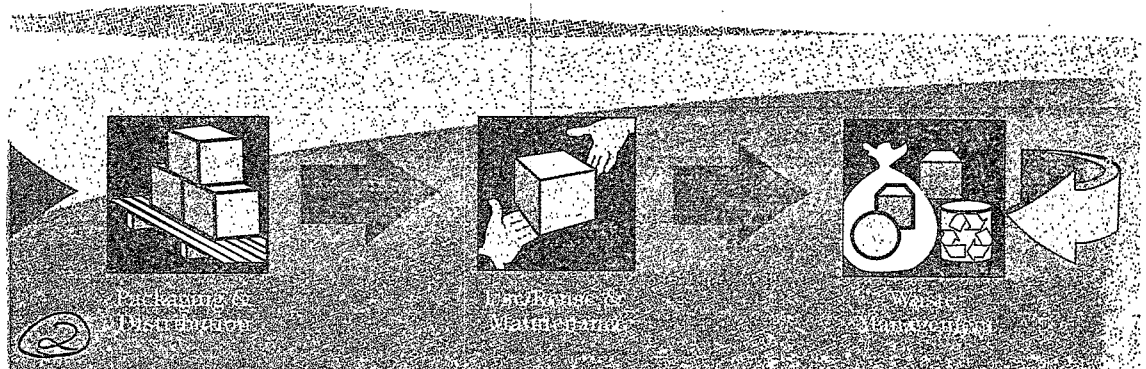
Approach

- The guidance is not regulatory and considers the federal government to be a consumer in the marketplace.
- EPA intends to bring together federal acquisition and environmental expertise, as well as the experience of all interested parties both inside and outside the government.
- EPA has held public meetings, received public comment, and continues to encourage input from all parties potentially affected by the guidance. This is to ensure that the final guidance is comprehensive, reasonable, and practical.

Overview

The proposed guidance includes a set of seven general guiding principles designed to help executive agencies begin the process of identifying and purchasing environmentally preferable products and services.

The proposed guidance also recommends implementation activities for executive agencies, such as issuing policy directives and applying the principles to pilot acquisitions.



T H E S E V E N

Principle #1: Pollution Prevention

Consideration of environmental preferability should begin early in the acquisition process and be rooted in the ethic of pollution prevention that strives to eliminate or reduce, up front, potential risks to human health and the environment.

Purchasers should consider a product or service's environmental impact at the time when they are deciding to purchase it. This approach allows for up-front elimination or reduction of potential risks to human health and the environment.

Principle #2: Multiple Attributes

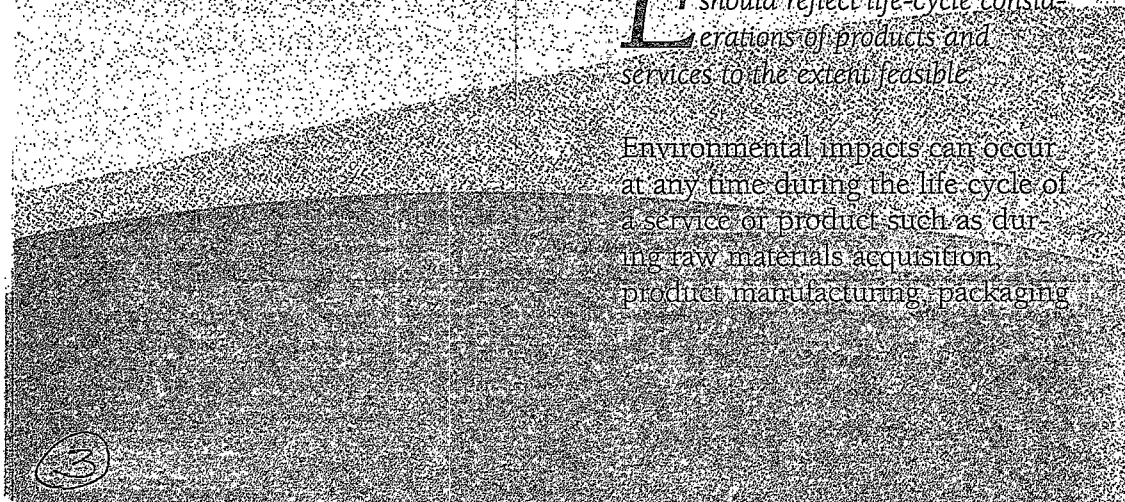
A product or service's environmental preferability is a function of multiple environmental attributes.

A specific product or service may have a number of environmental impacts in both natural resource consumption and toxic effects. Targeting a single environmental attribute can obscure other environmental impacts that might cause equal or greater damage.

Principle #3: Life-cycle Perspective

Environmental preferability should reflect life-cycle considerations of products and services to the extent feasible.

Environmental impacts can occur at any time during the life cycle of a service or product such as during raw materials acquisition, product manufacturing, packaging



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and transportation, distribution, use, maintenance, or disposal. Purchasers should consider various stages of a product or service's life cycle in evaluating its environmental preferability.

Principle #4: Magnitude of Impact

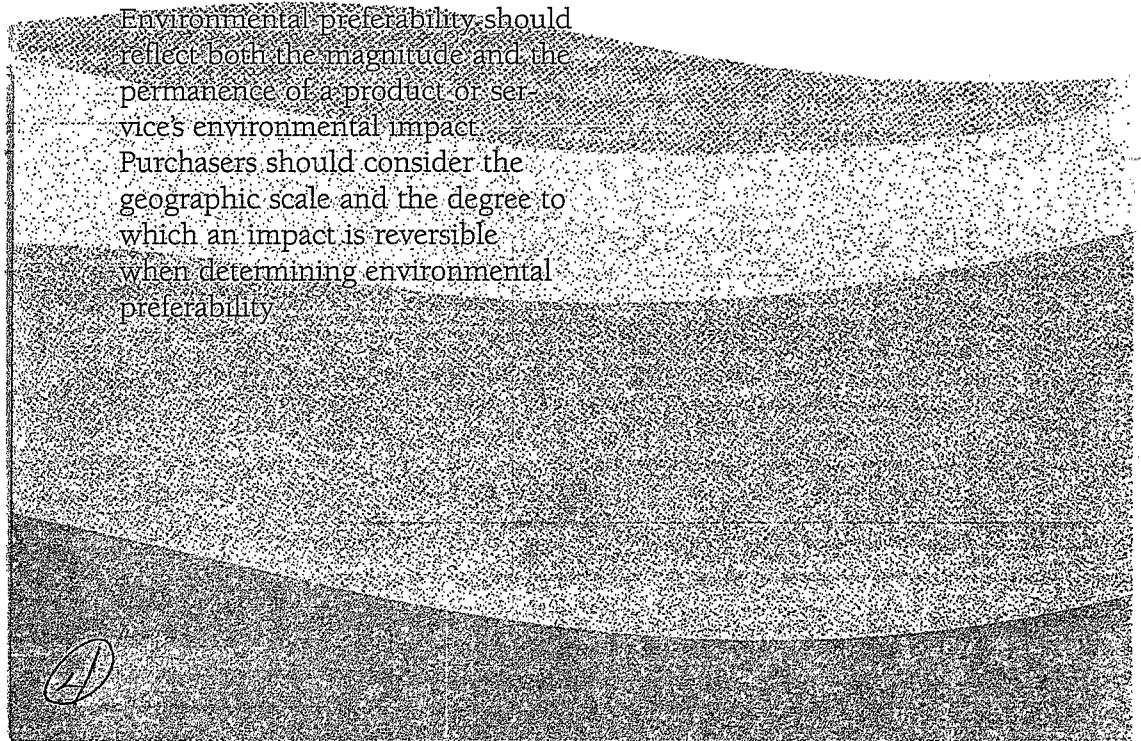
Environmental preferability should consider the scale (global versus local) and temporal aspects (reversibility) of the impacts.

Environmental preferability should reflect both the magnitude and the permanence of a product or service's environmental impact. Purchasers should consider the geographic scale and the degree to which an impact is reversible when determining environmental preferability.

Principle #5: Local Conditions

Environmental preferability should be tailored to local conditions where appropriate.

The magnitude and permanence of the environmental impacts of products and services will depend on where and how these products and services are used. Purchasers should factor in local conditions, such as natural resource availability, when evaluating products and services.



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Principle #6: Competition

Environmental attributes of products or services should be an important factor or subfactor in competition among vendors, when appropriate.

Environmental performance is one of many factors considered in purchasing and should serve as a basis for competition among vendors in the marketplace. This kind of competition will also foster continuous improvement in the environmental performance of products and services in the marketplace.

Principle #7: Product Attribute Claims

Agencies need to examine product attribute claims carefully.

Executive agencies should pay close attention to the environmen-

tal claims made by providers of products and services. Relying on several informational sources rather than just one will provide the most accurate assessment of a product or service's environmental performance.

Implementation Activities

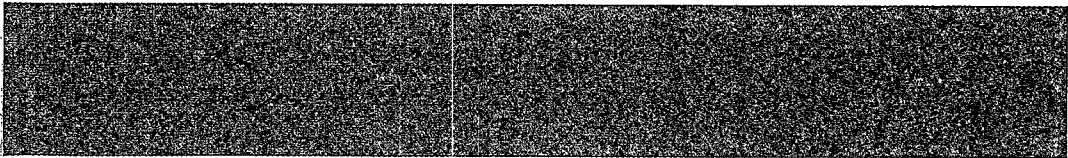
Policy Directives:

EPA recommends that each executive agency issue a policy directive that includes the following elements:

- Commitment to increase the acquisition of environmentally preferable products
- Incentives and award programs for those who successfully promote or purchase environmentally preferable products
- Pilot projects

Pilot Projects

Agencies can gain practical experience in purchasing environmentally preferable products and services



by applying the principles of the general guidance to a specific product or service acquisition. Pilot projects will generate more detailed guidance on purchasing environmentally preferable products and services. These pilots will also include tool development, training, and education.

EPA has identified a number of pilot projects that can be implemented in the short term:

- A joint EPA and General Services Administration (GSA) pilot demonstrating the purchase of environmentally preferable cleaning products.
- A joint GSA/EPA project to identify attributes of environmentally preferable computers. Energy efficiency, which has already been highlighted by the Energy Star program, will be one of a number of attributes examined in this pilot.

- Although not specifically mentioned in the guidance, EPA is investigating the possibility of implementing a building pilot that would include environmentally preferable leasing, construction, and building management.

Executive agencies are encouraged to volunteer other pilot acquisitions.

For More Information

Copies of EPA's proposed guidance document can be obtained by calling the Pollution Prevention Information Clearinghouse (PPIC) at (202) 260-1023. The guidance has also been published for public comment in the Federal Register on September 29, 1995 (60 FR 50722) and on the Internet at (<http://www.epa.gov/dots/EPA-TOX/1995/September/Day-29/pi-139.html>).

