

Step 5: Revising Procurement Policies and Procedures

Buying recycled products creates markets for recycled materials. It reduces the need for cutting, mining, and extracting new raw materials. **If you're not buying recycled products, you're not really recycling.** Follow these four steps to revise your procurement policies and procedures.

- 1) **Review current products and product specifications.** Examine all items that you buy. Which of these could be made of recycled materials but are not? Do you have outdated or unnecessary product specifications? Do the specifications impede your purchase of recycled goods?
- 2) **Develop a corporate purchasing policy for recycled goods.** Establish company-wide purchasing rules for recycled products. The likelihood of purchasing recycling products is much greater when top management takes the lead and encourages the entire company to purchase recycled products. Talk to other business people about creating a cooperative purchasing strategy.
- 3) **Develop minimum-content standards and price preferences for recycled products.** Many manufacturers still have to be convinced to provide recycled products at competitive prices. The technology is available but the demand hasn't fully developed. By specifying that certain items your business buys must have a minimum percentage of recycled content, you'll encourage manufacturers and suppliers to provide the kinds of products you want. As well, by allowing a five to ten percent price preference for products with recycled content, you'll demonstrate that you're willing to pay a bit more for environmentally-sound products.
- 4) **Modify product bidding procedures.** Several simple modifications to your bidding procedures will help encourage suppliers to find the recycled products you're looking for. Restructure your bidding system to:
 - allow separate bids for items with recycled content;
 - break large orders into smaller ones to prevent shutting out suppliers who may be able to fill partial orders;
 - allow for the introduction of competitively-priced recycled products during contract bidding;
 - allow for bulk purchasing of recycled products beyond your specific needs, to decrease price; and
 - be persistent – don't give up if your supplier is temporarily out of recycled products.

It's also important to:

- Acquire a basic understanding of waste reduction processes and related terms (e.g. recycled content, recyclable, post-consumer, etc.).
- Become familiar with standards affecting the purchase of environmentally-friendly products and services. For example, explore the Environmental Choice program (see **Solid Solutions Business Guide**, page 14).
- Beware of environmental opportunism. An example is manufacturers who claim their product contains recycled material when, in fact, it contains in-plant scrap that has been recycled back into the product. This does not qualify as a valid post-consumer, recycled-content product.
- Investigate your current purchasing practices to ensure there are no prohibitions or limitations on the use of reclaimed materials.
- Contact your suppliers to find out if they offer an environmentally-friendly line of products. If not, encourage them to do so or switch to suppliers that do.