

Saving Money by Buying Green

The environmental and health benefits of “green” products are well known. What is less evident – but equally important– is that many environmentally preferable products (EPPs) save money, either right off the bat or over time. That’s because some EPPs reduce electricity or water bills, last longer, or have lower maintenance or disposal costs. This fact sheet recommends green purchasing strategies that can save your agency money while protecting human health and the environment.

This resource was developed by The Responsible Purchasing Network (RPN), in collaboration with the Maryland Green Purchasing Committee. To learn more about Maryland’s Green Purchasing Program, visit:

<https://dgs.maryland.gov/Pages/GreenPurchasing/index.aspx>

Choose to Reuse

- **Consider surplus items before buying new.** An easy way to save money is to obtain surplus property, which is free of charge through Maryland Department of General Services’ Surplus Property Program. In 2019, over \$1.2 million in surplus items were distributed to State agencies, municipalities and nonprofit organizations in Maryland; these items included office furniture, electronics, appliances, food, and even ethyl alcohol, which was used by a municipality to manufacture hand sanitizer. To find available surplus property, go to <https://dgs.maryland.gov/pages/surplusproperty/index.aspx>.



- **Look for remanufactured toner and ink cartridges, furniture, and equipment.** A remanufactured toner cartridge typically costs 20-40% less per page than an equivalent toner cartridge made by the original equipment manufacturer (OEM). Several brands of remanufactured toner and ink cartridges are offered on Maryland’s statewide office supplies contracts with [AJ Stationers](#), [Cartridge Plus](#), [Rudolph’s](#) and [RGH Enterprises](#).

[Maryland Correctional Enterprises \(MCE\)](#) offers furniture restoration services, which according to MCE are “an attractive and economical alternative [to purchasing new furniture] featuring quality craftsmanship at an affordable price.”

- **Replace single-use batteries with rechargeables.** Rechargeable batteries have dramatically improved in performance over the past decade. Today, they can reliably power flashlights, head lamps, computer mice, paper towel dispensers, and many other types of equipment. Each rechargeable battery can replace 500-2000 single-use alkaline batteries, saving hundreds of dollars over their “lifetime.” Rechargeable batteries and chargers as well as flashlights and other equipment with a built-in rechargeable battery can be found on Maryland’s contracts for facility maintenance and electrical supplies ([Fastenal](#), [Grainger](#), [Graybar](#), [Home Depot](#), [Lowe’s](#) and [MSC Industrial Supplies](#)) and office supplies ([AJ Stationers](#), [Rudolph’s](#) and [RGH Enterprises](#)).
- Other **reusable products** that can save your agency money include washable dishware and cutlery, cotton and microfiber cleaning cloths (rather than disposable wipes), and refillable pens, pencils and tape.



Do More with Less

Some environmentally preferable products have a higher initial price tag, but quickly pay for themselves because they consume less electricity, fuel, water, paper or other materials than conventional products. Below are several examples to look for.

- **Avoid bottled water.** Consider installing a filtered water dispensing system that can be connected to your building's water supply system, which can replace expensive bottled water with tap water.
- **Energy-efficient products:** Many energy-efficient products reduce electricity consumption so much that they pay for themselves in 1-2 years – and then continue saving users money for years to come. The easiest way to find energy-efficient products is to **look for the ENERGY STAR label**. The US Environmental Protection Agency's [ENERGY STAR Program](#) lists certified products in nine categories: appliances, building products, food service equipment, servers and other data center equipment, electronics, heating and cooling equipment, office equipment, water heaters, and other (including electric vehicle charging equipment, water coolers, vending machines, and more). ENERGY STAR-certified products are offered on several of Maryland's statewide contracts for electrical and facility maintenance supplies; approved vendors include [Fastenal](#), [Grainger](#), [Graybar](#), [Home Depot](#), [Lowe's](#) and [MSC Industrial Supplies](#).



Did you know? ENERGY STAR has a Most Efficient certification for products that are the Best in Class! To find these innovative products, which include computer monitors, air conditioners, refrigerators, and more, go to www.energystar.gov/products/most_efficient.

- **IT equipment on the Electronic Products Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) Registry:** EPEAT-registered electronics are ENERGY STAR-certified and have other sustainability benefits such as fewer hazardous materials, less toxic emissions, and manufacturer-developed product recycling programs. By statute, all electronics (including computers, laptops, monitors, copiers and more) on Maryland's statewide contracts must be EPEAT-registered at the Silver level or higher.



Did you know? The State of Maryland cut its annual electricity bill by \$760,000 by purchasing 12,664 computers and other electronic products that are either [ENERGY STAR](#)-certified or [EPEAT](#)-registered. To read about this success story, see the [2020 Maryland Green Purchasing Committee Annual Report](#).

- **Imaging equipment that reduces paper use:** Multi-function devices (MFDs) – which can copy, print, scan and fax, as well as copiers and printers that can easily make double-sided images – significantly reduce paper consumption and save money. The State of Maryland has several contracts for imaging equipment that can reduce paper consumption by emailing, faxing and duplex printing.

Did you know? New York State began a concerted effort to reduce its copy paper use by changing its equipment and printing practices. Its most recent [Sustainability and Green Purchasing Report](#) highlighted tremendous cost savings from this initiative, noting that its “copy paper purchasing decreased 60 percent over the last decade, saving the State \$64.1 million since reporting began, and more than \$8 million in 2019 alone.”

- **LED lamps and lighting fixtures:** Replacing conventional incandescent, fluorescent and high-intensity discharge (HID) lighting equipment with LEDs significantly reduces electricity consumption as well as replacement, maintenance and disposal costs. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “LEDs use up to 90% less energy than incandescent lighting and last 35 to 50 times longer.” LEDs can even cost-effectively replace fluorescent T8 lamps, because they use about half as much electricity, last about twice as long, and are free of toxic mercury. LED lighting products are available on several of Maryland’s statewide contracts from the following vendors: [Fastenal](#), [Grainger](#), [Graybar](#), [Home Depot](#), [Lowe’s](#) and [MSC Industrial Supplies](#). Look for LED lamps, luminaires and retrofit kits that are certified by the [DesignLights Consortium \(DLC\)](#) or [ENERGY STAR](#) to be sure you’re getting quality products.

Did you know? The State of Maryland reduced its yearly electricity bill by approximately \$60,000 by purchasing LED light bulbs instead of incandescent and fluorescent lamps in FY 2020. Since LED lamps typically last 5-10 years, the total electricity savings is projected to be \$300,000-600,000 over the life of these products. See details in the [2020 Maryland Green Purchasing Committee Annual Report](#).

- **Water-efficient plumbing and irrigation products:** [US EPA’s WaterSense Program](#) has certified hundreds of water-efficient products, including toilets, faucets, showerheads, and irrigation equipment. According to EPA, “By replacing old, inefficient flushometer-valve toilets with WaterSense-labeled models, a 10-story office building with 1,000 occupants could save nearly 1.2 million gallons of water and nearly \$10,000 per year.” WaterSense-certified products are offered on several of Maryland’s statewide contracts: [Fastenal](#), [Grainger](#), [Graybar](#), [Home Depot](#), [Lowe’s](#) and [MSC Industrial Supplies](#).



Look for Long-Life Products

Products with a relatively long life save purchasers money because they don’t need to be replaced as often. High-yield toner and ink cartridges are good examples. While there is no standardized labeling of high-yield toner and ink cartridges, look for products with HY, UHY, LL, X or XL in their description or ordering code. They often contain over twice as much ink or toner as an equivalent standard-yield cartridge but cost only a fraction more. High-yield cartridges can be found on Maryland’s statewide office supplies contracts with [AJ Stationers](#), [Rudolph Supply](#) and [RGH Enterprises](#). A general rule of thumb is to look for products with the longest warranty.

Try Concentrates



Concentrated green cleaners may seem more expensive than cleaners in spray bottles or aerosol cans, but they are much less expensive when compared on a per-use basis. San Francisco [reported](#) that cleaners in aerosol cans cost up to 27 times more than concentrated green cleaners. Buying concentrates also lowers packaging and transportation costs. Not all concentrates are equal -- some are much more concentrated than others. When calculating costs, compare the recommended dilution ratios in the manufacturers’ instructions. Look for cleaners certified by Green Seal, Safer Choice or UL EcoLogo and that work with automatic dilution equipment, which prevents overuse. Concentrated green cleaners are offered on several of Maryland’s janitorial supplies contracts from [Blind Industries of Maryland \(BISM, a Maryland Preferred Provider\)](#), [Fastenal](#), [Grainger](#), [Home Depot](#), [Lowe’s](#), [Veritiv](#), and [MSC Industrial Supplies](#).

Factor in Maintenance Costs

Maintenance costs – especially labor – are often overlooked or undervalued. A good example of an environmentally preferable product (EPP) with lower maintenance costs is PVC-free resilient flooring (e.g., linoleum), which avoids lifetime use of floor polish and strippers commonly needed for PVC (vinyl) flooring.



Other EPPs with significantly lower maintenance costs include solar-powered generators (which do not need to be refueled or flushed out like diesel or propane generators), and electric vehicles (EVs, which do not require oil changes). According to the [US Department of Energy](#), “Alternative fuel and fuel-efficient advanced vehicles, including hybrid electric vehicles and plug-in electric vehicles, can reduce a fleet's fuel use, making them economical options for many fleets. Cost savings from vehicle maintenance, operation, and fuel use often offset higher purchase prices.” You can find EVs and chargers on Maryland’s statewide contracts. Approved vendors for EV chargers include [Lilypad EV](#) and [Greenlots](#).

- **Use native plants** for your landscaping and save on both maintenance costs as well as energy and water costs, while protecting biodiversity. Native plants have evolved to the local weather and environmental conditions, and don’t need extra fertilizer, water, and pesticides to thrive. Buy native plants from the [DNR Nursery](#).
- **Follow Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles** in your pest control methods to increase cost efficiencies. According to the U.S. EPA, "As a first line of pest control, IPM programs work to ... prevent pests from becoming a threat, adding that IPM "can be very effective and cost-efficient and present little to no risk to people or the environment."

Adopt Cost-Saving Strategies

- **Look for grants and rebates from federal and state agencies as well as utilities** to offset higher upfront costs of energy-efficient products and solar-powered equipment (e.g., photovoltaics and solar-powered generators).
- **Use Maryland’s statewide contracts** to find environmentally preferable products and services available at discounted prices. You can find a list of Green Products and Services on Maryland statewide contracts at <https://dgs.maryland.gov/Pages/Procurement/BidsAwards.aspx>.
- **Add sustainable products to your Core/Market Basket List** to encourage vendors to offer their highest discounts on those items – or develop an “all-green” contract to let vendors know you’re serious about buying EPPs. Award contracts to vendors offering the best pricing on green products.
- **Purchase cooperatively:** Team up with other States or “piggyback” on their contracts to save time and secure higher discounts from vendors. But make sure the contract offers a wide array of green products with deep discounts. Cooperative contracts are available through [NASPO ValuePoint](#), [Sourcewell](#), [OMNIA](#) and several other cooperative purchasing organizations.
- **Avoid overnight shipping** and ask vendors for discounts for reducing the frequency of deliveries.

