



# ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIFICATION GUIDANCE FOR CLEANING SUPPLIES

The District of Columbia is committed to procuring quality goods and services in a timely manner and at a reasonable cost that support the District in meeting its sustainability goals. Compliance with specification guidance for cleaning products (general all purpose, bathroom, glass, floor, and carpet cleaners, and hand sanitizers) is sufficient to meet PPRA Section 1101(a) environmentally preferable procurement requirements. Additional information is provided below for some product categories (sanitizers, specialty, and miscellaneous cleaning products) that is supplementary, and, although recommended, is not required for compliance with PPRA 1101(a). To access solicitation documents with full contract language, [click here](#).



## BENEFITS

Commonly used disinfectants contain chemicals that cause cancer and asthma

Green cleaning and disinfecting products are safer and less toxic

Concentrated cleaning products are

**93%**

less expensive than ready to use formulations

### SOURCES

Safer Disinfectants for COVID-19 at <https://sfapproved.org/safer-disinfectants-covid-19>

[Espinoza, T., Geiger, C., and I. Everson. 2009. The Real Costs of Institutional 'Green' Cleaning](#)

<https://cmmonline.com/articles/the-costs-and-profit-of-sustainable-green-cleaning>

## Scope

The environmental specification applies to the following types of cleaning products:

1. General purpose (all purpose) cleaners and degreasers, dish soap
2. Bathroom cleaners and deodorizers (includes hard surface, toilet, and urinal products)
3. Glass, mirror, and window cleaners
4. Carpet, rug, and upholstery cleaners (includes routine and spot cleaning products)
5. Floor cleaners, strippers, sealers, and finishes
6. Hand soaps, hand cleaners, and hand sanitizers
7. Toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, and facial tissue

Additional context on ecolabels included in the specification and environmental hotspots is also provided.

## COPY AND PASTE THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATION LANGUAGE INTO THE REQUIREMENTS SECTION OF YOUR STATEMENT OF WORK

### EPPS Requirements

Cleaning products purchased by the District of Columbia shall meet the environmental criteria defined below.

Products shall be certified under at least one (1) of the following ecolabels:

- Ecologo
- Green Seal
- Safer Choice

Sanitary paper products (Toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, and facial tissue) shall contain recovered fiber or postconsumer recycled content (PCRC):

- Toilet paper shall contain at least 20%
- Paper towels shall contain at least 40%
- Napkins shall contain at least 30% PCRC, 100% RC
- Facial tissue shall contain at least 10% PCRC;100% RC

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and product labels for purchased cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing products shall be provided via email in Excel, Word, or in a PDF when purchased products are delivered.



## Supplementary Recommendations

To further improve the environmental performance of cleaning supplies purchased by the District of Columbia beyond the minimum requirements of the environmental specification guidance, purchasers should consider adopting the supplementary recommendations defined below.

### DISINFECTANTS AND SANITIZERS

1. Cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing products shall include a [Material Safety Data Sheet \(MSDS\)](#) and product label with a list of ingredients and instructions for proper handling.
2. The product manufacturer or contractor shall offer training on the proper use of cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing products upon request.
3. Cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing products shall be ordered in concentrated form, wherever practical. Concentrated cleaning products shall be packaged and designed to be used in a closed dilution control system that limits worker exposure to chemical concentrates while facilitating the proper dilution of chemical concentrates.

### SPECIALTY CLEANING PRODUCTS

1. The following cleaning products are classified as Specialty Cleaning Products:
  - a. Metal polish (including but not limited to chrome and brass cleaner)
  - b. Furniture polish
  - c. Graffiti remover
  - d. Gum remover
  - e. Lime and scale remover
2. Specialty cleaning products shall either be:
  - a. Green Seal certified;
  - b. Ecologo certified;
  - c. EPA Safer Choice; *or*
  - d. Not contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in concentrations that exceed the levels required by the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) Regulation for Reducing Emissions from Consumer Products for the specific product category according to the most current version of the CARB regulations in effect at the time of purchase.

### MISCELLANEOUS JANITORIAL PRODUCTS

Janitorial products purchased by the District shall meet the following criteria:

1. Vacuum cleaners shall have high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters.
2. Microfiber mops, cloths, and sponges shall be purchased instead of cotton.
3. Protective gloves shall not contain PVC or vinyl.
4. Trash bin and recycling bin liners shall contain at least 10% PCR or have a thickness of less than 0.7 ml.
5. Recycling bin liners shall be clear, white, or natural in color.
6. Composting bin liners shall be Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) certified to meet the ASTM D6400 standard for commercial compostability of plastics.



## Additional Information



Green Seal is a nonprofit standard setting organization certifying a range of products and services. Green Seal conducts scientific testing and on-site audits to verify that products meet recognized standards. Relevant standards include:

GS-34: Cleaning and Degreasing Agents; GS-37: Cleaning Products for Industrial and Institutional Use; GS-40: Floor Care Products; GS-41: Hand Cleaners; and GS-53: Specialty Cleaning Products. Green Seal cleaning products are widely available and commonly specified by jurisdictions throughout the United States. Certified products can be found at <https://certified.greenseal.org/>.



**EcoLogo** certifications are managed by UL, a global safety science company. Similar to Green Seal, [EcoLogo](#) certifies cleaning and other types of products based on scientific testing and third-party

audits. Relevant standards include: UL2784/CCD-104: Hand Cleaners; UL2796/CCD 107: Odor Control Products; UL2792/CCD-10: Biologically Based Cleaning and Degreasing Compounds; UL2759/CCD-146: Hard Surface Cleaners; UL2777/CCD-147: Hard Floor Care Products; UL2795/CCD-148: Carpet and Upholstery Cleaners; UL2783/CCD-170: Instant Hand Antiseptics; and UL175: Sanitary Paper Products. Compliant products are listed in [UL's Sustainable Product Guide](#). EcoLogo cleaning products are widely available and are specified by several jurisdictions throughout the country.



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's [Safer Choice](#) program screens products for potential human and environmental hazards and only labels products with ingredients that pose the least concern among chemicals in their class. A variety of cleaning products carry the logo, including: all-purpose cleaners; carpet cleaners; floor cleaners, finishers, and strippers; hand soaps; toilet bowl cleaners; and window/ glass cleaners. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists labeled products at <https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice/products>. Several jurisdictions specify products with the label.

**Disinfectants** and **sanitizers** play an important role in keeping people healthy by killing bacteria, viruses, and other organisms that can make people sick. As the products are designed to kill living organisms, they are inherently toxic and should be used only as required.



The **Federal Insecticide and Fungicide Act (FIFRA)** requires that disinfecting and sanitizing products be registered as a pesticide with EPA and only use EPA-approved efficacy claims on the product label. Product labels detail the types of bacteria, viruses, and fungi the product is approved to kill, the dwell time, or the amount of time it takes for the product to kill specified organisms, and the level or percent of microorganisms killed when a product is used according to manufacturer's instructions. All FIFRA-registered products and their registration forms can be found in EPA's [Pesticide Product Label System \(PPLS\) database](#). Care should be taken to use a disinfectant or sanitizer which is registered to be effective in killing targeted pathogens.

**Active ingredients** in commonly used disinfectants and sanitizers can cause cancer, asthma, and skin irritation or sensitization. [Safer Products and Practices for Disinfecting and Sanitizing Surfaces](#), a 2014 report prepared for the City of San Francisco's Department of Environment, identified safer sanitizers and disinfectants that meet the city's performance needs for these products. The active ingredients listed in the specification language of this guidance document were recommended through this study because they are not known or suspected to cause negative health impacts commonly associated with this class of chemicals and they are effective at killing targeted microorganisms. Performance and environmental and human health information on these active ingredients as well as information on the specific products tested can be found in the report which can be downloaded [here](#). Active ingredients used in a disinfectant or sanitizer are listed on the product label as an active ingredient.

Procuring **concentrated** cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing products saves money and reduces energy consumption associated with the transport of the product purchased in a diluted, **ready to use** form. With very concentrated products, **closed dilution control systems** are used to: 1) Eliminate the potential for exposure to the cleaning product in concentrated form thereby reducing the potential for accidents or injury; and 2) Ensure no more of the product is used than required to get the desired results. Green Seal, EcoLogo, and Safer Choice



## Additional Information (continued)

standards include criteria for when a closed dilution control system is required as well as performance and safety criteria for the dilution control system. While the use of concentrated cleaning products is encouraged, it may not be appropriate for every type of cleaning product, use, or application. **Ready to use** cleaning products should be purchased and used as needed.



**Postconsumer recycled content (PCRC)** reflects the proportion of a product recycled from consumer materials that otherwise would have been disposed. Consistent with [U.S. EPA's](#)

[Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines](#), this specification requires purchasing janitorial paper products with varying levels of recycled content. The Guidelines serve as the model for specifications in many jurisdictions around the country. Other forms of recycled content not included in the specification include preconsumer recycled content and total recycled content. Preconsumer recycled content refers to the percent of a product made from manufacturing waste, while total recycled content refers to the sum of the postconsumer and preconsumer recycled content. Note that the recycled content logo is not required.

**Microfiber** mops, cloths, and sponges have several benefits over cotton. First, microfiber traps dirt from surface cracks and crevices that cotton cleaning products are too large to reach. Second, microfiber requires less water and chemicals than conventional cotton cleaning products. Third, using microfiber instead of cotton helps preserve surface finishes by not leaving scratches. Fourth, microfiber mops are lightweight and safer to use than conventional mops. Finally, microfiber cleaning products can save money in the long run by using less water and chemicals, increasing productivity, and preventing injuries.



High-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum cleaners trap dust and other irritants, improving indoor air quality. HEPA air filters are designed according to federal standards to remove 99.97% of airborne particles

measuring 0.3 micrometers in diameter. By trapping harmful particles such as dust mites and pollen, HEPA filters prevent or reduce health problems such as allergies and asthma.

This specification prohibits the purchase of gloves made with **vinyl (PVC or polyvinyl chloride)**. PVC is made from vinyl chloride and a variety of additives, often including a class of chemicals called phthalates. Many types of phthalates used to manufacture PVC are included on California's Proposition 65 List for carcinogenicity and reproductive toxicity. The additives can be released when flexible PVC is bent through off gassing. Vinyl chloride, the base material used to make PVC, is classified as a human carcinogen by the U.S. EPA. Plants that manufacture PVC may emit vinyl chloride during manufacture, exposing workers and the local community to a carcinogenic compound.



This specification requires bin liners used to collect and transport waste for composting are **Biodegradable Product Institute (BPI) certified** to

meet the ASTM D6400 standard for commercial compostability of plastics. This means that the products have been independently tested and verified to decompose in industrial or municipal facilities without leaving behind harmful toxics or plastic residues. A database of BPI certified compostable products is available at <http://products.bpiworld.org/>.



**Environmental Hotspots** Key human health and environmental benefits associated with this specification

**TOXICITY/HEAVY METALS** Green Seal, EcoLogo, and Safer Choice prohibit or restrict certain toxic chemicals that have been linked to serious health problems for building occupants and janitorial staff, including asthma and cancer.

**PACKAGING** Green Seal, EcoLogo, and Safer Choice require less material intensive packaging methods and/or recycled content for packaging of their certified products.

**END-OF-LIFE DISPOSAL** Green Seal, EcoLogo, and Safer Choice require distributors to offer training or information on proper disposal methods to reduce adverse impacts on health and the environment.

**Significance to the District**

**PPRA** [PPRA § 104](#) specifies that products meet Default Environmental Standards. U.S. EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines for post-consumer recycled content (PCRC), Green Seal, Eco Logo, and EPA's Safer Choice label all are Default Environmental Standards (DES).

**LEGISLATION** [Healthy Schools Act of 2010](#), Section 501 requires the use of environmentally friendly cleaning supplies in public schools.

**LEED FOR EXISTING BUILDINGS: O&MM** [LEED v4](#) awards one point for [Indoor Environmental Quality: Green Cleaning—Products and Materials](#) if at least 75%, by cost, of the total annual purchases of these products meet green cleaning requirements. This covers Green Seal, Eco Logo, Safer Choice, and EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines for janitorial paper products and trash bin liners.

For more information about sustainable specification guidance or the District's Sustainable Purchasing Program, please visit: <https://ocp.dc.gov/page/sustainable-purchasing-program> or call the OCP Procurement Center of Excellence at: [202.724.4477](tel:202.724.4477) or email [sppdc@dc.gov](mailto:sppdc@dc.gov).