



Green Tools

Powered by the Solid Waste Division

Eco-Cool Remodel Tool



Green Product Buying Guide

Read this before purchasing building materials

If you want your building product choices to have a broader impact beyond the walls of your own remodeling project, consider the “three Ps.”

- 1. PEOPLE:** what are the health impacts to people throughout the product’s lifecycle?
- 2. PLANET:** what are the environmental impacts throughout the product’s life, including ecosystem and habitat health, air quality, water quality and resource depletion?
- 3. PROFIT:** what impacts does the product have on the local economy (jobs, infrastructure) and on your pocketbook?

The more “Ps” a material meets, the greener it is and the better you can feel about the choices you make. Many green products can also help earn points toward green building certification. Here’s a guide for what to look for when choosing building materials if the three “Ps” are important to you.

LOOK FOR THESE LABELS:

Wood Products



FSC – Requires sustainable wood harvesting practices. Applies to working forests, wood and paper products.

Cleaning Products, Paints and Coatings, Lighting and Control Products, Other Building Products



Green Seal – The attributes evaluated by this certification vary based on product type.



GREENGUARD – Helps buyers identify interior products and materials that have low chemical emissions.

LOOK FOR THESE LABELS:

Flooring

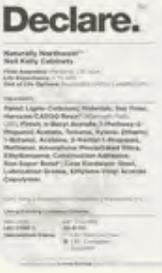
	<p>FloorScore – Tests products for compliance with the emissions criteria in CA Section 01350, for healthy indoor air quality. Applies to hard surface flooring and adhesives.</p>		<p>CRI Green Label – Ensures that flooring products promote a healthy indoor air quality through emissions testing. Applies to carpet, cushions, and adhesives.</p>
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Appliances, Light Bulbs, Heating, Electronics, Plumbing Fixtures, Irrigation Equipment

	<p>ENERGY STAR - Evaluates the energy efficiency of equipment. Applies to appliances, light fixtures, computers and electronics, and heating equipment.</p>		<p>WaterSense – Evaluates the water efficiency of products, ensuring they are 20% more efficient than standard fixtures without sacrificing performance. Applies to toilets, kitchen and bathroom faucets, showerheads and irrigation equipment.</p>
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Multiple Products

	<p>Cradle to Cradle – Evaluates and certifies products for health and sustainability based on 5 attributes: social fairness, material health, material reutilization, renewable energy, and water stewardship.</p>		<p>NSF – Evaluates health, environmental, energy, manufacturing and disposal attributes.</p>
			<p>SCS Global Services – Provides environmental, sustainability and food quality certification, auditing, testing and standards development.</p>

	<p>Declare – An emerging labeling system from the International Living Future Institute. The labels, which are earned after rigorous review, act like a ‘nutrition label’ for building materials and products, creating greater transparency about the impact of a product and its ingredients.</p>
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AVOID THESE MATERIALS:

Both for human health and environmental impacts, avoid the following chemicals and materials in any building product that you choose:

- BPA (Bisphenol A)
- Lead
- PVC (Polyvinyl chloride)
- HFRs (halogenated flame retardants)
- Phthalates
- VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds)

PURCHASING CONSIDERATIONS:

Below are important questions to ask when buying new materials and tips to help you find the answers, followed by benefits to your project and the three “Ps” of sustainability: People, Planet, and Profit.

Considerations	Questions to Ask	Project Benefits	Why does it matter?
Raw Materials			
Salvaged materials	<p>Can you find this product from a salvaged or second use source? <i>Local options include Earthwise, Second Use, Ballard Reuse, Craigslist</i></p>	<p><i>Adds a great story to your project.</i></p> <p><i>Can reduce costs.</i></p>	<p><i>Reusing materials keeps them out of landfills, saves virgin materials.</i></p> <p><i>Improves local jobs and benefits the community.</i></p>
Environmental impacts of virgin materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it contain recycled content? <i>Look for labels that show at least 25% “post-consumer” recycled material.</i> • What are the virgin materials used and is the extraction/ harvesting process environmentally harmful? <i>Non-recycled steel requires invasive mining for raw materials.</i> • Are the virgin materials rapidly renewable? <i>Examples of rapidly renewable materials are bamboo, cork, cotton, and wheat.</i> • Are the materials sustainably grown and/or managed? <i>Look for FSC-certified wood products</i> 		<p><i>Better forestry practices can prevent disasters such as flooding and landslides.</i></p> <p><i>Supporting sustainable practices reduces demand for harmfully extracted materials, helping keep local ecosystems safe.</i></p>

Considerations	Questions to Ask	Project Benefits	Why does it matter?
Manufacturing and Transportation			
Energy use, water use, byproducts, pollution from process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the product contain any ingredients on the list of items to avoid? <i>If yes, look for alternatives. For example, instead of PVC plumbing, consider ABS or PEX.</i> Are significant amounts of pollution released from the manufacturing process? <i>Ex. Concrete and steel production require combustion, which releases CO₂ and other pollutants into the atmosphere.</i> 	Protects human and environmental health.	<p><i>Reduces air pollution and carbon impacts.</i></p> <p><i>Improves worker health and the health of communities near factories.</i></p>
Environmental impacts of the transport of materials – local/regional vs. import	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where are the raw materials harvested or extracted? How are they transported to the manufacturing facility? <i>Ex. Some rating systems recommend sourcing materials within 500 miles of your project. Do your research before the purchasing phase as many manufacturers provide transparent supply chain information.</i> 	May improve product price stability when gas prices fluctuate.	<p><i>Reduces carbon impacts associated with transportation.</i></p> <p><i>Supports local industries and jobs.</i></p>
Human Health Impacts			
Indoor air quality – occupant health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the product labeled as low- or no-VOC? For composite wood products, such as cabinet boxes, shelving or countertops, make sure there is no added urea-formaldehyde (NAUF). <i>Ex. Use Medite instead of MDF.</i> 	Protects the health of those living in your home.	
Worker health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the manufacturing process dangerous to employee health? <i>Ex. Many overseas production facilities have lax employee health regulations, so consider prioritizing USA produced goods. If possible, read the ingredients to identify harmful chemicals that may have been hazardous to employees at the production facility– formaldehyde, lead, chlorine, etc.</i> Is the installation (cutting, gluing, moving) process dangerous to installer health? <i>Ex. If the warning label requires personal protective equipment, this will help you understand its toxicity.</i> Is there a pre-finished version of the product that avoids application of paints or coatings in your home? <i>Ex. Prefinished trim or doors.</i> 	Protects your health and/or the health of your contractor/subcontractors.	<p><i>VOCs contribute directly to local air pollution (smog), so choosing products with less VOCs can help improve local air quality.</i></p> <p><i>Improves equity and community health associated with marginalized workers.</i></p>

Considerations	Questions to Ask	Project Benefits	Why does it matter?
Durability and Maintenance			
Life span and Embodied energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How long will this product last? <i>If possible, prioritize products with 40- to 50-year warranties.</i> Does it require the use of special (potentially toxic) cleaning products and practices? Can the product serve two purposes? <i>Ex: Polished concrete can be the structural flooring as well as the finished surface.</i> 	<p><i>Saves money by reducing replacement costs.</i></p> <p><i>Saves money by using one product for two purposes.</i></p>	<p><i>Creates local jobs.</i></p> <p><i>Reduces air pollution.</i></p> <p><i>Saves natural resources.</i></p>
End of Life			
Reuse, Recycling, Disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can it be salvaged and reused? Can it be recycled? <i>Visit your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/wdidw to determine the recyclability of the material in King County.</i> Will it need to go in a landfill at end of its life? Does the manufacturer offer a take-back program? <i>Check the manufacturer website or call customer service. Products such as carpeting and acoustical ceiling tiles often have this option.</i> 	<p><i>Decreases disposal costs if there is a recycle market for your product.</i></p>	<p><i>Keeps valuable materials out of our landfill.</i></p> <p><i>Promotes local recycling and deconstruction industries and jobs.</i></p>



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