

## City adopts sweeping 'green' purchase policy

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### Goal is to create eco-friendly market

**By Mike Lee**

STAFF WRITER

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SAN DIEGO – San Diego officials Wednesday unveiled a sweeping initiative to increase the city's purchases of environmentally friendly products – from pencils to police gear – and services.

The plan goes way beyond buying recycled office paper to include, for instance, a preference for products that are biodegradable, energy efficient and less toxic.

“It's a big thing in cities now,” said Denise Vedder, spokeswoman for Carlsbad, which is evaluating a similar approach. “We are looking for ways to maintain the quality of life . . . by being more efficient in our use of resources.”

The concept is to stimulate the regional market for eco-friendly products, drive down the cost of those items through bulk purchases and reduce harmful environmental effects created by some of the area's largest buyers of goods and services.

Santa Monica and Bay Area cities are credited with pioneering the idea in California several years ago. The trend took awhile to reach San Diego County, but it's catching on. In July, for example, Chula Vista started an environmentally preferable purchasing program.

“It's the holistic approach,” said Lynn France, environmental services manager for Chula Vista. “Sometimes (cities) have to set the pace.”

Across the country, many local governments have focused on buying specific goods such as recycled paper and hybrid vehicles. However, relatively few have broadened their criteria like San Diego, which each year spends at least \$100 million on products, and more on services.

Pieces of the city's purchasing program have been in place for years. But starting yesterday, San Diego officials said they would require an explicit preference for environmentally friendly products across all departments. They promised to report annually on the program's results.

The city's new standards include 12 environmental criteria that will be added to the procurement process along with price and performance standards. The goal is to buy items and services with as many ecologically friendly characteristics as possible.

Mayor Jerry Sanders announced the approach at a news conference set in the city's central store, where he was surrounded by items ranging from light bulbs and bandages to sun hats and traffic cones.

He said the purpose was to review “every single thing we do . . . to make sure it's environmentally friendly.”

Sanders said San Diego already has reduced costs with some “green” purchases, such as reconditioned tires and recycled toner cartridges. These days, the city even uses rubber from recycled tires in the slurry that seals streets.

“We want to create an end-market for recycled products,” said Tammy Rimes, San Diego's deputy director of purchasing and contracting. “Once you have a market for something, the market helps drive the prices down.”

In Santa Monica, environmental programs manager Dean Kubani said his city started its purchasing program in the early 1990s and is helping to expand it nationwide by developing product specifications that meet the criteria for government agencies. In this way, manufacturing companies can tailor their products to the emerging market.

He said Santa Monica hasn't done a detailed cost analysis of its program.

“In a lot of cases, we end up saving a lot of money because the things that we buy reduce our energy costs,” Kubani said. “In other cases, there may be more upfront costs, like for janitorial products, but we are doing it because they protect the health and safety of the janitors and the public.”

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