

Summary of the U.S. Government's Regulations on Chemicals in Cleaning Products

Following is an overview of the regulations and efforts (some voluntary, some enforced) that exist under the federal government, compiled on the basis of extensive electronic and traditional research methods. Compiled by ISSA,[®] The Leading Association for the Cleaning Industry.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

A. Executive Order. [Executive Order 13101](#) issued in Sept. 1998 (supercedes EO 12873 issued Oct. 1993) in which Pres. Clinton proclaimed that it was the policy of the Federal Government to help “Green” the Government through federal acquisition policy that provided a preference for Environmentally Preferable Products.

B. GSA. In regard to cleaning products, the GSA catalog identifies products that meet the acute toxicity (Oral LD 50 > 50mg/kg; Inhalation LC 50 > 2mg/L) and biodegradability (OECD Ready Biogradibility, 60-70% biodegradable within 28 days). Suppliers of products that meet these standards are then encouraged to voluntarily report additional information on the following environmental attributes:

- Skin Irritation
- Air Pollution Potential (i.e., VOC content)
- Fragrances
- Dyes
- Reduced Packaging/Recycled Content
- Minimize Exposure to Concentrate

C. EPA's Office of Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (www.epa.gov/epp). [EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing](#) (EPP) is a federal-wide program that encourages and assists Executive agencies in the purchasing of environmentally preferable products and services.

EPP has issued a guide titled [Greening Your Purchase of Cleaning Products](#) that lists various product attributes that EPP encourages federal purchasers to incorporate into their cleaning contract purchasing decisions.

The following is a summary of some of the criteria set forth in EPP's Greening Your Purchase of Cleaning Products:

- Minimal presence of or exposure to potentially harmful chemicals
- Use of renewable sources, such as biobased solvents
- Low VOC content
- Biodegradable
- Low aquatic toxicity
- Low flammability (i.e., flashpoint greater than 200°F)

- Designed for use in cold water
- Limit use of disinfectants to critical areas
- Concentrated formulas
- Efficient and recyclable packaging
- Recycled content packaging
- Refillable bottles
- Pump sprays as opposed to aerosols
- Dilution systems designed to reduce exposure
- Products shipped in bulk

D. USDA Biobased Products Preferred Procurement Program. Pursuant to the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act, the USDA is establishing guidelines for designating products made from biobased materials that will be afforded procurement preference by Federal agencies.

The purpose of this program is to: (1) Increase domestic demand for many agricultural commodities that can serve as feedstocks for the production of biobased products; (2) Substitution of products with a possibly more benign or beneficial environmental impact compared to fossil fuel based products; (3) Enhance the Nation’s energy security by substituting biobased products for fossil fuel based products derived from oil and natural gas.

USDA has issued several rounds of proposed rules that would designate various cleaning and maintenance products as biobased. In [Round 2](#) of the USDA rulemaking process, USDA has proposed to designate as biobased hand cleaners and sanitizers, and graffiti and grease removers. [Round 3](#) addresses glass cleaners and carpet and upholstery cleaners, and [Round 4](#) covers bath and tile cleaners, floor strippers, de-icers, and wood and concrete sealers.

More information on the USDA Biobased Products Preferred Procurement Program can be obtained by going to: www.biobased.oce.usda.gov.

E. EPA Design for the Environment (DfE) Formulator Initiative. The [DfE Formulator Initiative](#) engages formulators in a partnership that encourages and supports formulators in their efforts to design and manufacture cleaning products with a more positive environmental and health and safety profile. In addition, EPA’s DfE is working to establish a database of ingredients for hard surface cleaners that will have a positive environmental and health and safety profile.

1. DfE Formulator Initiative. Under its Formulator Initiative, [DfE](#) invites interested formulators to enter into a partnership in which DfE acts as an environmental consultant and shares its wealth of information regarding green formulations, including new “green” ingredients. Formulators can tap into DfE’s chemical expertise, including its technical review team with specialized chemical knowledge. DfE can help formulators fill data gaps with unique models that can be used to estimate aquatic toxicity, biodegradation, etc.

DfE has set forth a full discussion of the criteria it uses in evaluating environmentally preferable cleaners in a document titled [*A Discriminating and Protective Approach to Cleaning Product Review and Recognition.*](#)

For more information please visit

<http://www.epa.gov/dfepubs/projects/formulat/index.htm>.

2. DfE Green Formulation Initiative. [DfE](#) and [GreenBlue](#) are working together to create and make available a database of ingredients known as [CleanGredients](#) for hard surface cleaners that will have a positive environmental and health and safety profile. Ideally it will help lower the cost of developing environmentally preferable cleaning product formulations by making credible data available to the formulating community. It will make self-certification easier, and less costly, as well as assist companies in pursuing third party certifications. For more information on this initiative, please visit www.cleangredients.org.

3. Safer Detergents Stewardship Initiative (SDSI). EPA is developing the [Safer Detergents Stewardship Initiative \(SDSI\)](#) to recognize companies, facilities, and others who voluntarily phase out or commit to phasing out the manufacture or use of nonylphenol ethoxylate surfactants, commonly referred to as NPEs. These surfactants are used in detergents in cleaning and other products. Both nonylphenol ethoxylates and their breakdown products, such as nonylphenol, can harm aquatic life.

The Safer Detergents Stewardship Initiative will complement EPA's Aquatic Life Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Nonylphenol. These criteria are designed to protect aquatic life in both fresh and saltwater and can form the basis for state and tribal water quality standards. For more information, see the [Aquatic Life Criteria for Nonylphenol](#).

F. EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines Program. The [EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guideline \(CPG\)](#) program is part of EPA's continuing effort to promote the use of materials recovered from solid waste. Buying recycled-content products ensures that the materials collected in recycling programs will be used again in the manufacture of new products.

The CPG program is authorized by Congress under [Section 6002](#) of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and [Executive Order 13101](#). EPA is required to designate products that are or can be made with [recovered materials](#), and to recommend practices for buying these products. Once a product is designated, [procuring agencies](#) are required to purchase it with the highest recovered material content level practicable.

A key component of the CPG program is EPA's list of designated products and the accompanying recycled-content recommendations. Of particular interest to the cleaning industry are the recycled-content recommendations for:

- [Commercial and Industrial Sanitary Tissue](#) (which covers bathroom tissue, paper towels, paper napkins, facial tissues and general industrial wipes)
- [Plastic Trash Bags](#),
- [Office Recycling Containers and Waste Receptacles](#)
- [Mats](#)
- [Sorbents](#)

G. Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE). [OFEE](#) is dedicated to promoting sustainable environmental stewardship, including the purchase of environmentally preferable products, throughout the federal government. OFEE has devoted a web page to the discussion of “[green janitorial products and services](#).”