

Environmentally Preferred Sourcing Program

EPS Toolkit: Packaging and shipping materials

Choosing green packaging materials and shipping techniques is not always easy, and implementation can be challenging.

However, the rewards of directly reducing waste and the potential cost savings through packaging reuse and reduction makes the time spent worthwhile.

What you can do

Reuse shipping materials

Extend a product's useful life by reusing the box or packaging rather than recycling it. Use old bubble wrap, packing peanuts, crumpled newspaper and magazine pages. Polystyrene peanuts should be reused for future shipping needs whenever possible. If you can't use them, call the Peanut Hotline at (800) 828-2214 or visit www.loosefillpackaging.com for the nearest location that accepts polystyrene peanuts for reuse.

Include language about packing material in your supplier specifications

Including language in your specifications will educate your supplier about your environmental preferences. When purchasing items that are packed in boxes or with packing peanuts, require that the vendor is responsible with their packing materials.

Consider including a statement that vendors take back all their packaging material, that they use recycled or biodegradable materials. Or, request that they do not use plastic packaging. Language could include:

"It is desirable that all corrugated packaging contain a minimum of 35 percent post-consumer recycled content and provide certification from the carton manufacturer/supplier to verify the actual percentage of recycled content."

Use recycled or biodegradable materials

Buy boxes that are made from recycled fibers or fibers sourced from managed forests and choose either recycled polystyrene peanuts or biodegradable, reusable packing peanuts. These are starch-based — made from the sorghum grain or corn starch — and dissolve with water or in a compost setting and leave no chemical residue. They can also be reused or composted.

Resist plastic packaging

While bubble wrap and other plastic packaging are technically recyclable, it is not easy to find outlets that will take them, so avoid these products when possible.

Work with your distributors to encourage shipping in environmentally preferable ways

Earth-friendly shipping and logistic options are readily available and more accessible than you may think. Consider the following options:

- Consolidation programs that provide you the opportunity to ship full truckloads by combining purchase orders headed to a single location or area onto one truck
- Buying carbon offsets to offset the shipping

What are polystyrene peanuts?

Polystyrene or foam peanuts, also known as packing peanuts, are a common loose-fill packing material used to prevent damage to objects during shipping. Introduced by Dow Chemical in 1965, they are roughly the size and shape of a peanut in its shell and made of polystyrene, a liquid hydrocarbon commercially manufactured from petroleum.

In the loose-fill world, the color and shape tell what it is made of and who made it. Green is 70 percent or more recycled polystyrene, white is 70 percent or more virgin resin, and pink means anti-stat has been applied, although there are some variations.

The Vizient Environmentally Preferred Sourcing (EPS) Program offers members supply and service cost savings through more than 36,000 supplier agreements. EPS suppliers have verified EPS attributes and provide products that can support members' sustainability objectives. This toolkit is a resource to help members create or enhance their sustainability programs.

As the nation's largest member-driven health care performance improvement company, Vizient provides network-powered insights in the critical areas of clinical, operational, and supply chain performance and empowers members to deliver exceptional, cost-effective care.



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