



ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING (EPP)

*Providing Buyers, Catalogers and Item Specialists
The Information Busy People Need to Keep Current*

New Environmental Attributes Approved

IN THIS ISSUE

New Attributes Approved

On Nov 13, the Joint Group on Environmental Attributes approved 2 new attributes, bringing the total to 6

Asbestos Alternative Products

New attribute for products available with and without asbestos

Low Standby Power

Not to be confused with the energy efficient attribute, this deals with products when they are turned off

Biobased Products

What does the Farm Bill have to do with DoD? Plenty. On the horizon, this issue will make its way front and center in the world of affirmative procurement in the coming year.

At its meeting on November 13, the Joint Group on Environmental Attributes approved 2 new attributes, bringing the total number to six. Asbestos Alternative Products and Low Standby Power join Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines, Low-VOC, Energy Efficiency and Water Conserving Products as approved attributes. Third Party Certification was considered, but was deferred until the next meeting, tentatively scheduled for February 12, 2003. In the interim, the Joint Group asked DLA to develop a pilot program to see how Third Party might be implemented. The Joint Group also received a briefing from the Department of Agriculture on the provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill dealing with biobased products, and establishing a government wide affirmative procurement program. Can the Farm Bill affect DLA? You bet it can.

Becoming a New Attribute

A proposed attribute must meet three criteria to be approved: it must be a policy priority; it must have a clear definition (usable by product center teams and catalogers for specifying products in contracts and identifying them in FLIS); and it must have a cost benefit. It is up to the Joint Group on Environmental Attributes to decide whether proposed attributes meet these criteria, with each member getting one vote. The vote must be unanimous in order for a new attribute to be approved.

Asbestos Alternative Products

Considerable time was spent at the meeting discussing the necessity of establishing asbestos alternative products as an attribute. First regulated in 1971 by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), it is now also regulated by EPA under various statutes and rules. An attempt by EPA to prohibit asbestos was partially overturned in court, meaning a number of product categories used by DoD can contain asbestos, if manufacturers chose to use it. To further complicate matters, there are some products DoD uses for which there is no technology available to replace asbestos that meets performance requirements. This is particularly true for some weapons systems applications. Differing perspectives regarding the availability of products where consumers have a choice between asbestos-containing or non-asbestos products was one of the core issues the Group struggled to resolve. One perspective was that since many manufacturers have eliminated or are eliminating asbestos from their formulations, why should DLA spend resources coding products in FLIS that contain asbestos if they're going away anyway? The other perspective came from individuals involved in numerous studies of asbestos, who found that within the federal stock classes they managed, both types of products were readily available and both were stocked in DLA inventories. The outcome of the discussion was to approve the attribute, but establish a narrow enough definition to eliminate products for which only products without asbestos were available. The idea was to eliminate your desk, for example, from being classified for preferential procurement because it contains no

asbestos. So, the agreed definition became:

“Asbestos Alternative Products have less than 1.0 percent asbestos by weight or area (EPA Test Method, Appendix E -- 40 CFR 763.163, Subpart E) when otherwise equivalent products containing 1.0 percent or more asbestos are also available.”

So, why do we care about asbestos? Asbestos is made up of microscopic bundles of fibers that may become airborne and inhaled. When inhaled, they can cause asbestosis (a lung disease frequently found in naval shipyard workers) or mesothelioma (a cancer of the outer lining of the lung). Asbestos is not a hazard where it cannot become airborne. In buildings, for example, asbestos in good condition should be left alone and checked periodically to make sure it cannot become airborne, or "friable." In addition to the health effects, asbestos must be disposed in licensed landfills, and legally required recordkeeping is becoming increasingly costly. Protective equipment and procedures for handling asbestos are also expensive.

The Navy worked with DSCP to identify about 4000 replacement NSNs for over 9000 existing NSNs. The Air Force established a framework for asbestos management and developed a list of over 46 suspect asbestos containing materials. Since the list was completed, manufacturers have stopped using asbestos in a number of product categories, particularly building materials. DSCP has also developed standard language for "asbestos alternative" for use in contracts. One implementation issue that consumed considerable time at the meeting was the need to establish new NSNs for asbestos alternative products, delete the asbestos containing NSN once the existing stock has been disposed of, and confirming that new procurement contracts prohibit vendors from supplying new products that contain asbestos, except where there is no technically feasible alternative.

Low Standby Power

The Group received a briefing on Low Standby Power from Michelle Ware of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, who supports the DoE Federal Energy Management Program. In June 2001, the President signed Executive Order 13221, "Energy-Efficient Standby Power Devices." It states:

“Each agency, when it purchases commercially available, off-the-shelf products that use external standby power devices, or that contain an internal standby power function, shall purchase products that use no more than one watt in their standby power consuming mode.”

The definition for ICPs and catalogers is an unambiguous list of manufacturers and model numbers posted on the FEMP web site, at: <http://oahu.lbl.gov/>. Ten product types are currently listed, with another 20 under consideration. Since there is no cost or reliability difference between products that consume low power in standby mode and those that do not, there is a clear cost benefit by avoiding the unnecessary power consumption.

The Executive Order goes on to say:

“The Department of Energy, in consultation with the Department of Defense and the General Services Administration, shall compile a preliminary list of products to be subject to these requirements.”

The instruction here is that DLA, GSA and DoE must develop a cooperative mechanism to identify additional products appropriate to include in the low-standby preferential procurement program.

Biobased Products

Ron Buckhalt of USDA briefed the Group on the provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill that require establishment of a government wide preferential procurement program for biobased products. Specifically, title IX requires USDA to develop guidelines for designating biobased products; publish a list of biobased products for federal purchase; issue criteria for being placed on the Designated Biobased Products List (DBPL); and establish a voluntary USDA labeling program. The law specifically requires agencies to give preference to DBPL products. While still early in implementation, a quick survey of affected product categories

indicates big impact for DLA, with products from all ICPs included. DESC is already the largest buyer of biodiesel fuel in the world. During the coming year, USDA will work with the industry to publish guidelines and the product list, and work with agencies, particularly DLA and GSA, to implement the preferential procurement program. Stay tuned...there will more to come on this topic..