

PURPOSE

An “eco-label” identifies a product that meets specified environmental performance criteria or standards, and is awarded by a third-party organization to products or services that are determined to meet the criteria or standards. This resource is intended to help federal agencies and facilities understand eco-labels that may be associated with the electronic products they procure.

DISCLAIMER

This resource should in no way be interpreted as an endorsement from the Federal Electronics Challenge (FEC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE), of a specific non-governmental entity, organization or program. For more information on how federal purchasers may use the expertise and assistance of such non-governmental programs, please see EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program's *Information on Standards for Green Products and Services*, at: <http://www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/guidance/standards.htm>.

UNDERSTANDING ECO-LABELS

“Eco-labeling” is a voluntary approach to environmental performance certification that is practiced around the world. An eco-label identifies a product that meets specified performance criteria or standards. In contrast to “green” symbols or claim statements made by manufacturers and service providers, an eco-label is awarded by a third-party organization for products or services that are determined to meet specific environmental criteria. When specifying or purchasing a product that carries an ENERGY STAR® label, for example, the purchaser knows the product meets an energy efficiency standard set by EPA.

Different types of organizations including governments, nonprofit and for profit organizations have developed eco-label programs. The breadth of, and issues addressed by, eco-label programs vary. For example, ENERGY STAR is focused on energy use during equipment operation, while other eco-labels address life cycle environmental concerns and still others cover ergonomic and worker, health and safety issues. Federal purchasers deciding to utilize eco-labels to assist purchasing decisions should carefully review the criteria to be sure the program reflects their specific concerns and federal requirements.

Environmental performance labels and declarations vary greatly. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has identified three broad types of voluntary environmental labels.

Type I	Voluntary, multiple-criteria based, third party program that awards a license which authorizes the use of environmental labels on products indicating overall environmental preferability of a product within a product category based on life cycle considerations.
Type II	Informative environmental self-declaration claims.
Type III	Voluntary programs that provide quantified environmental data of a product, under pre-set categories of parameters set by a qualified third party and based on life cycle assessment, and verified by that or another qualified third party.

Federal purchasers can use eco-labels or other voluntary environmental performance criteria and verification tools, to inform purchasing decisions and procure greener products. For example, eco-labels or certifications may be used as minimum performance criteria in bid specifications or to select between otherwise equivalent products.

Many types of products from paint to paper to electronics are evaluated by eco-labeling organizations worldwide. Many countries have government-sanctioned eco-labeling schemes that include electronics in their labeled products.

REQUIRED ECO-LABELS

The Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), Part 23, *Environment, Energy and Water Efficiency, Renewable Energy Technologies, Occupational Safety, and Drug-Free Workplace* and Executive Order 13514, *Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance*, mandate that federal agencies meet at least 95 percent of acquisition requirements for electronic products with Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT®) registered products, as well as procure ENERGY STAR® qualified products and Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) designated products.



ENERGY STAR®

<http://www.energystar.gov/>

ENERGY STAR is a government program that helps purchasers identify and purchase energy efficient products in more than 60 product categories. The program partners with manufacturers, allowing them to use the ENERGY STAR label to identify products that have been independently verified as meeting the energy efficiency specifications defined by the program.



Federal Energy Management Program

http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/technologies/procuring_eeproducts.html

The Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) specifies federal requirements for energy efficiency and low standby power in electronic products. FEMP defers to ENERGY STAR for many of its energy efficiency specifications, but also maintains its own database of products meeting its low standby power requirements.



Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT®)

<http://www.epeat.net/>

EPEAT is a procurement tool designed to help evaluate, compare and select electronic products based on their environmental attributes. EPEAT registers products that meet minimum performance standards in multiple categories such as energy efficiency, toxicity reduction, end-of-life product management and corporate responsibility. EPEAT regularly and randomly selects registered products and standard criteria to verify product conformance with the applicable standard. EPEAT currently registers computer desktops, laptops, and monitors.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Aside from ENERGY STAR and FEMP, there are two other U.S. based government programs that provide standards and guidance for the purchase of electronic products and peripherals.



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines

<http://www.epa.gov/cpg/>

The U.S. EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guideline (CPG) program promotes the use of recycled materials by designating products that are or can be made with recovered materials and by recommending minimum recycled content levels when buying these products. CPG specifies federal requirements for recycled content in copy and printing paper.



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Database of Environmental Information for Products and Services

<http://yosemite1.epa.gov/oppt/epstand2.nsf>

The Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Database is a searchable database of product-specific information (e.g., environmental standards and guidelines or contract language) developed by government programs, both domestic and international, as well as third parties.

OTHER U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL ECO-LABELS

The Global Eco-labeling Network (GEN) maintains comprehensive lists of the international eco-labels available for a variety of products, including copiers, printers, fax machines, multifunction devices, computers, monitors, toner cartridges and copy/printing paper. To access the list, and continue on to an individual eco-label's website, please see:

http://www.globalecolabelling.net/categories_7_criteria/list_by_program/.

The websites for individual eco-labels have information on the electronic product types labeled; criteria development and revision; and certification and verification protocols.

REFERENCES

The text of Executive Order 13514 is available at: <http://www.fedcenter.gov/programs/eo13514/>.

The FAR is available at: <https://www.acquisition.gov/far/>.

Information about ISO 14020, the ISO standard for eco-labels, is available at:

http://www.iso.org/iso/iso_catalogue/management_standards/iso_9000_iso_14000/iso_14000_essentials.htm.

More information about GEN is available at: <http://www.globalecolabelling.net/>.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions related to this resource or need other assistance with the Federal Electronics Challenge, please contact your Regional Champion: <http://www2.epa.gov/fec/technical-assistance>.

Visit the FEC online: <http://www2.epa.gov/fec/>

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