



IN PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFE CHEMICALS



## RESOURCE GUIDE TO THIRD-PARTY CERTIFICATIONS AND ECO-LABELS

This collection of third-party certifications and eco-labels can be useful in creating or implementing an environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) policy. The certifications below are organized by product categories and include a brief description and a link for further information.

*\* Important note: Ecolabels vary in strength and thoroughness and the level of verification. Not all certifications are complete without considering other attributes. Single attribute certifications are based on verification for one criteria, such as energy efficiency. Multi-attribute certifications verify a variety of attributes for a product or service.*



### BIODEGRADABLE PRODUCTS

**Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI):** A nonprofit organization that certifies products that will biodegrade in a commercial composting facility. Products must meet standards indicating they will biodegrade quickly, completely, and safely, leaving no synthetic residues. As of January 2020, certified products will not contain PFAS. The institute has a [product catalogue](#) of BPI certified products.



### BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

**Living Building Challenge:** Program based on an iterative process of monitoring and updating building material performance standards of place, water, energy, health and happiness, materials, equity, and beauty.



**LEED:** Building projects, including new construction, interior fit outs, operations and maintenance, and core and shell, earn points for various green building strategies across several categories. Based on the number of points earned, the project is certified at 1 of 4 LEED rating levels. The newest LEED criteria is now more focused on toxics reduction in building materials. If your city or county is looking to build a new building under LEED certification, it will need to meet these new criteria to hit the higher LEED levels.



**Cradle to Cradle:** A third-party sustainability label that requires achievement across multiple attributes including safer chemicals (material health), efficient use of water, use of renewable energy, material reutilization (recycling or composting), and corporate social responsibility. Cradle to Cradle evaluates the full life cycle of a product. The Cradle to Cradle [certified products registry](#) identifies products at various levels of achievement, including building supply and materials.



## BUILDING MATERIALS

**Living Product Challenge** and **Declare Label:** multi-attribute standard that certifies products based on seven performance areas: place, water, energy, health and happiness, materials, equity, and beauty. Certified products are toxic-free, socially responsible, made with respect to the rights of workers, and net positive to people and the environment. Declare labels provide transparency using clear, informative "nutrition labels" for building products.



## **Business + Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association**

**(BIFMA):** Develops furniture safety, durability, and sustainability standards. A multi-attribute sustainability standard, called Level, is BIFMA's third-party certification program for the furniture industry. Level takes account of a company's social actions, energy use, material selection, and human and ecosystem health impacts.



**GreenGuard Certification:** GreenGuard is a single attribute program that helps manufacturers create and buyers identify interior products and materials that have low chemical emissions (including VOCs), improving the indoor air quality. [GreenGuard Gold](#) offers stricter certification criteria, including safety factors to account for sensitive populations, and ensures products are acceptable in environments like schools and healthcare facilities.



## CLEANING CHEMICALS AND SERVICES

**Green Seal:** A US-based nonprofit, multi-attribute standard setting organization. Green Seal certifies environmentally preferable standards and services, citing environmental standards of environmentally preferable cleaners and services.



**UL ECOLOGO:** ECOLOGO certifications are voluntary, multiattribute, life cycle-based environmental certifications that indicate a product has undergone scientific testing, auditing or both, to prove its compliance with third-party, environmental performance standards. These standards set metrics for a wide variety of criteria in some or all of the following categories: materials, energy, manufacturing and operations, health and environment, product performance and use, and product stewardship and innovation.



**Safer Choice:** EPA program that helps consumers, businesses, and purchasers find products that contain ingredients that are safer for human health and the environment and perform at or above the same standard as other products. This standard is recommended to use for specialty cleaning products such as keyboard cleaners, whiteboard cleaners, and other niche products that may not be certified by other certification programs.



## ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS

**Electronic Products Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT):** A global rating system for sustainable electronics. EPEAT currently includes categories for PCs and displays, televisions, imaging equipment (printers, copiers, scanners, multifunction devices, fax machines, and mailing machines), and mobile phones. The EPEAT online registry lists sustainable products from many different manufacturers. EPEAT for Purchasers has many other resources for municipal, institutional, and state purchasers.



**Energy Star:** A joint program of the Department of Energy and EPA, Energy Star is a single-attribute program that promotes energy efficiency in more than 60 product categories. Almost 3,000 manufactured products now feature the Energy Star label.



**e-Stewards:** A global program designed to enable individuals and organizations who dispose of old electronic equipment to easily identify recyclers that adhere to the highest standard of environmental responsibility and worker protection. This includes not sending electronics to developing countries, landfilling or incinerating materials, or using prison labor to recycle electronic parts.



**TCO Certified:** A sustainability certification for 11 categories of IT products (displays, notebooks, tablets, smartphones, desktops, all-in-one PCs, projectors, headsets, network equipment, data storage products, and servers). TCO supports efforts to reduce risk and promote social and environmental responsibility through independent verification of criteria through the IT product life cycle. This includes criteria on working hours, working environment, worker wages, energy efficiency, ergonomic design, and hazardous substance content. Certified products can be found in their [Product Finder](#).



## ENERGY

**Green-e:** A labeling program established by the Center for Resource Solutions that verifies renewable energy, such as solar and wind energy, and makes it easy for businesses and individuals to identify and purchase certified clean energy. The Center for Resource Solutions certifies green power products and independently verifies the products annually.



## FIREFIGHTING FOAMS

**GreenScreen Certified:** A third-party certification that identifies PFAS-free firefighting foams. Products receive one of three scores--bronze, silver, or gold--based on their toxicity. A [database of certified products](#) is available online.



## FLOORING (CARPETING)

**Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) Green Label Plus:** A single attribute certification that certifies carpets, adhesives, and cushions that have very low emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) to improve indoor air quality. Their testing standards include a restricted substances list.



## FLOORING (RESILIENT)

**GreenGuard Certification:** GreenGuard is a single attribute program that helps manufacturers create and buyers identify interior products and materials that have low chemical emissions (including VOCs), improving the indoor air quality. [GreenGuard Gold](#) offers stricter certification criteria, considered safety factors to account for sensitive populations, and ensures products are acceptable for use in environments like schools and healthcare facilities.



**SCScertified:** A neutral third-party that certifies, validates, and verifies environmental, sustainability, and food safety and quality performance claims. [SCS Indoor Advantage](#) certifies furniture and building materials based on VOC emissions and overall indoor air quality.



**FloorScore:** An indoor air quality certification standard for hard surface flooring materials, adhesives, and underlayments developed by SCS and the Resilient Floor Covering Institute. To be certified, products must be tested for and comply with VOC emissions standards.



**Cradle to Cradle:** A third-party sustainability label that requires achievement across multiple attributes including safer chemicals (material health), efficient use of water, use of renewable energy, material reutilization (recycling or composting), and corporate social responsibility. Cradle to Cradle evaluates the full life cycle of a product. It's certified [platinum or gold floor coverings](#) have the highest achievements.



## FOOD

**USDA Organic:** A certification for crops, livestock, processed foods, and wild crops that are produced according to USDA organic regulations. These regulations address soil quality, animal raising practices, pest and weed control, and the use of additives. Organic producers rely on natural substances and physical, mechanical, or biologically-based farming methods. Synthetic fertilizers or pesticides, antibiotics, hormones, and artificial preservatives are among the list of prohibited substances in organic foods. A list of [certified organic operations](#) is available online.



**Fair Trade:** Evaluates produce, clothing, home goods, personal care producers for standards of income sustainability, empowerment, individual and community well-being, and environmental stewardship. Fair Trade certified goods support responsible companies, empower farmers, workers, and fishermen, and protect the environment.



## FURNISHINGS

**GreenGuard Certification:** GreenGuard is a single attribute program that helps manufacturers create and buyers identify interior products and materials that have low chemical emissions (including VOCs), improving the indoor air quality. [GreenGuard Gold](#) offers stricter certification criteria, considered safety factors to account for sensitive populations, and ensures products are acceptable for use in environments like schools and healthcare facilities.



**SCScertified:** A third-party certification that validates, and verifies environmental, sustainability, and food safety and quality performance claims. [SCS Indoor Advantage](#) certifies furniture and building materials based on VOC emissions and overall indoor air quality.



**Cradle to Cradle:** A third-party sustainability label that requires achievement across multiple attributes including safer chemicals (material health), efficient use of water, use of renewable energy, material reutilization (recycling or composting), and corporate social responsibility. Cradle to Cradle evaluates the full life cycle of a product. The Cradle to Cradle [certified products registry](#) identifies products at various levels of achievement, including furniture.



## MULTIPLE PRODUCT CATEGORIES

**Blue Angel:** A German ecolabel that certifies a variety of products and services according to stringent requirements in health, occupational, and consumer protection. Blue Angel has criteria for multiple categories including [flooring](#), carpeting, [building materials](#), cleaning products, [electronic products](#), and many more.



**[Nordic Ecolabel or Nordic Swan:](#)** The official sustainability ecolabel for products from the Nordic countries. It was introduced by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1989. The Nordic Swan covers 67 different product groups, from hand soap to furniture to hotels. The program certifies and verifies that all requirements are met before [a product is approved for certification](#).



**[SCScertified:](#)** A third-party certification that validates, and verifies environmental, sustainability, and food safety and quality performance claims. Services include Non-GMO Project verification, Carbon Neutral Certification, Sustainable Supply Chain, and Sustainable Forestry Initiative Chain of Custody. [SCS Indoor Advantage](#) certifies furniture and building materials based on VOC emissions and overall indoor air quality.



## OFFICE SUPPLIES

**[The Art and Creative Materials Institute, Inc \(ACMI\):](#)** An international association of about 200 art, craft, and creative material manufacturers which promotes safety in art and creative products through its certification program. The AP (Approved Product) Seal identifies art materials that are safe and certified in a toxicological evaluation by a medical expert to contain no materials in sufficient quantities to be toxic or injurious to humans or to cause acute or chronic health problems. Such products are certified by ACMI to be labeled in accordance with the chronic hazard labeling standard, ASTM D 4236, and the U.S. Labeling of Hazardous Art Materials Act (LHAMA).



## TEXTILES

**[Global Organic Textile Standard:](#)** Developed to unify existing standards in eco-textile processing and define requirements that ensure organic status of textiles, including harvesting of the raw materials and environmentally and socially responsible manufacturing. GOTS covers the processing, manufacturing, packaging, labeling, trading, and distribution of all textiles made from at least 70% certified organic natural fibers. The GOTS public [database](#) allows consumers to search for certified products online.



**[Standard 100:](#)** Certification from OEKO-TEXT for textiles that tests every component of the product for some harmful substances to reduce chemicals that can be harmful to the environment or human health. Certified suppliers and products can be found in their [Buying Guide](#).



## TRANSPORTATION

**SmartWay:** Voluntary public-private program from the EPA that helps companies advance supply chain sustainability by measuring, benchmarking, and improving freight transportation efficiency. The program's [partners and affiliates](#) are identified as providers of efficient freight carriers, transportation modes, equipment, and operational strategies to improve sustainability and lower costs of transportation.



## WATER-RELATED PRODUCTS

**EPA WaterSense:** A single-attribute, voluntary partnership program sponsored by the EPA as both a label for water-efficient products and a resource for water conservation. WaterSense identifies water-efficient products, new homes, and programs that meet the EPA's criteria for efficiency and performance. These products and services use 20% less water, save energy, and perform as well as or better than regular models. You can [find WaterSense products](#) online.



## WOOD PRODUCTS

**Forest Stewardship Council (FSC):** Sets standards for responsible forest management. A voluntary program, FSC uses the power of the marketplace to protect forests for future generations by certifying sustainable harvesting of wood and paper in production. The certification is based on 10 principles and 70 criteria based on social and environmental practices and impact. There are 3 FSC on-product labels:

- FSC 100%: 100% of the wood comes entirely from FSC-certified forests
- FSC Mix: The wood within the product is from either FSC certified forests, recycled material, or other controlled sources. Controlled wood cannot be illegally harvested or from other undesirable sources
- FSC Recycled: All wood or paper in a product comes from reclaimed or reused material. It contains post-consumer and pre-consumer materials