



# SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING QUICK GUIDE: DOORS, DRYWALL, AND PAINT

*Ecology Center and Safer States' Sustainable Purchasing Quick Guides are a series of fact sheets highlighting sustainable purchasing options for high volume, high impact products. They are designed to help cities, counties, and states create safer communities through the purchase of more environmentally and socially conscious products.*

## Why Doors, Drywall, and Paint?

There are many environmental and human health concerns from the products that make up our built environment, and that we see and touch every day. Doors made from composite wood can contain toxic formaldehyde. The natural gypsum that composes some drywall is a non-renewable resource and mining it can negatively impact the environment. Drywall can also emit harmful pollutants. Paints that contain toxic chemicals can emit harmful toxicants into the air, even long after application. While doors, drywall, and paint are necessary, there are often safer and more sustainable options available.

## Solutions: Municipalities Taking Action

Municipalities are substituting safer alternatives where they are cost effective and available. Solid wood doors with no added formaldehyde should be preferred over composite wood. Drywall should be made of natural gypsum and have low amounts of pre-consumer recycled content and should have a [CDPH emission certification](#). Paints should have low or no volatile organic compound (VOC) content. For example, the [Design Requirements and Guidelines](#) developed by Massachusetts' Bureau of Housing Development and Construction requires all paints, stains, and varnishes to be limited to low or no VOC content. The City of San Francisco has a [comprehensive policy](#) on architectural paints.

## Benefits

Purchasing safer and more sustainable doors, drywall, and paint protects the health of workers and building occupants, and is better for the environment. The chemicals in composite wood doors and standard paints can be toxic to humans. Switching to solid wood doors without added formaldehyde and paints with low VOC content and emissions reduces the amount of harmful chemicals released into the building and breathed in by workers and occupants. Manufacturing synthetic gypsum emits mercury, which is highly toxic. Switching to natural gypsum reduces the amount of mercury in the environment.

## Tools and Resources

- [Ecology Center Directory for Sustainable Purchasing: Buildings](#); Directory of resources for sustainable purchasing of building materials
- HomeFree Product Guidance for [Composite Wood](#), [Drywall](#), and [Interior Paint](#); General guidance and ranking system for choosing safer products
- Enterprise Green Communities' [Criteria for Materials](#); Criteria for affordable housing, including interior materials