

Strategies to Reduce Toxic Materials in New Buildings and Renovations

For Washington State Agencies and Colleges

- **HAVE EARLY CONVERSATIONS** – Start discussions early with your architect, during the schematic design phase of the project. Share these instructions with them. Make sure the project specifier is involved. Include your toxic reduction goals in the Owner Project Requirements (OPR), and in negotiating the architect’s contract.
- **USE THIRD PARTY BUILDING CERTIFICATION** – Using relevant credits in existing certifications is an easy way to incorporate less toxic materials into a new project. At a minimum, direct the architect to pursue the following LEED points:
 - LEED – Materials and Resources – Two credits are provided for [Building Product Disclosure and Optimization – Material ingredients](#). One point is awarded for selecting products that have disclosed ingredients. A second point is available for selecting optimized products.
 - LEED – Indoor Environmental Quality – Three credits are provided for selecting [products that have low Volatile Organic Carbon \(VOC\) content and emissions](#) (for some product categories).
- **ENCOURAGE TRANSPARENCY-** Give priority to products with publicly disclosed ingredients. Prefer products that have all contents characterized, screened, and identified. Examples of transparency standards are Health Product Declarations (HPD) and Declare labels. Further, prefer products that have full public disclosure (to 100 ppm) and have had their contents verified through the HPD or Declare Label third-party verification program.
- **IDENTIFY TOXIC CHEMICALS** – Learn what toxic chemicals are common in construction materials.¹ Build awareness on the importance of reducing or eliminating materials of concern in building products.
- **RESTRICT KNOWN HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS IN PRODUCT CATEGORIES WHEN ALTERNATIVES ARE AVAILABLE** ² – Specify products that do not contain those toxic chemicals for both the products and those that are used to maintain/clean the product. When possible, specify independent third party certifications that go beyond restrictive substance lists. Example third party certifications include:
 - [Cradle to Cradle](#)[™]
 - [Safer Choice](#)
 - [GreenScreen Certified](#)[™]

¹ An example of a list of toxic chemicals that are used in construction is the ILFI Red List (<https://living-future.org/declare/declare-about/red-list/#red-list-and-watch-list-cas-guide>). A free tool that can be used to assess chemicals as well as review some common building materials is Pharos (<https://pharosproject.net/common-products>).

² An example resource that provides information on toxic chemicals and alternatives is HomeFREE. This initiative has general hazard information and guidance on several product categories used in buildings (<https://homefree.healthybuilding.net/products>).