

OMF W.I.S.E ~ First Friday Facts

Buyer Beware:: Don't Be Greenwashed

Many people have already taken the plunge into buying “green”, whether its 100% post-consumer waste (PCW) recycled paper, biodiesel, or low-mercury lighting. But have you noticed that more and more products are being marketed with some “green” claim? A recent study found that out of 1,018 consumer products with 1,753 “green” claims, only one of those claims was valid. How do you know what is really a less-toxic or more environmentally preferable product versus good marketing?



Read ingredient labels or Material Data Safety Sheets (MSDS).

Get to know what is in the products you buy. For some commodities, there are reputable online resources to help you understand ingredient properties. One resource example for personal care products is:

> Skin Deep, Cosmetic Safety Database: www.cosmeticsdatabase.com

Look for Details. Are claims backed up by a third-party certification or further information?

Understand typical “greenwashing” tactics.

> Check out the report “[The Six Sins of Greenwashing](#)” at

Look for valid, third-party eco-labels.

> Consumer Reports’ [Eco-Labels Center](#)
> List of typical eco-labels used in public procurement and related information:

www.portlandonline.com/omf/index.cfm?c=44001

Greenwash: the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service.

Want to Learn More About “Buying Green” ?

At the City: Bureau of Purchases’ Buy Green website:

www.portlandonline.com/buygreen

At Home: Center for a New American Dream “Conscious Consumer”:

<http://www.newdream.org/consumer/index.php>

Want to Learn More About Where “Stuff” Comes From and Why What We Purchase (or Don’t Purchase) Matters?

Check out “The Story of Stuff” at www.storyofstuff.com. The Story of Stuff is a 20-minute, fast-paced, fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns.



This Friday Fact is brought to you by the OMF “W.I.S.E Guys & Gals”: Workplace Innovators for a Sustainable Earth, OMF’s new sustainability team. Watch for new tips every first Friday of the month!