



Think ahead.

Guide to sustainable workplace hygiene



Top 10 hygiene product sustainability considerations



1. More with less

Given that hygiene products like toilet paper, hand towels, soaps and sanitisers are everyday essentials used in facilities it's important to make conscious choices that minimise unnecessary usage. Dispensers that are designed to take one sheet at a time reduce over consumption and paper quality has an impact on how many sheets or meters of product are used. The aim is to use only what's needed to optimise resource efficiency.



2. Staff efficiency

Labour is the largest component of cleaning costs, typically accounting for 80% of total cost, so the choice of your dispensing system and refill quality has a major impact on the amount of refill servicing that is required. Dispenser capacity, portioned control dispensers and refill quality that prevents mess are all important considerations to reduce the amount of servicing.



3. Life cycle impact

Products can carry a range of claims and even 'green assumptions', but don't tell the actual life cycle impacts. Life cycle assessments and Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) allow you to make comparisons and choices based on real data that has been independently verified. In addition, they allow you to calculate and report the impacts of products used including carbon emissions.



4. Carbon footprint

Organisations committed to reducing carbon emissions will need to be able to capture 'Scope 3' (indirect emissions from raw materials purchased, products used and travel) emissions data for the products they purchase. In fact, for many organisations Scope 3 indirect emissions are much more significant than their Scope 1 and 2 direct emissions so finding suppliers that have ambitious targets will help ensure you can deliver your emission reduction goals.



5. Circularity

Are you choosing products that minimise waste and are designed for recyclability and resource recovery? Many organisations have waste reduction targets and having circular products is key to achieving these goals. Composting hand towels, napkins and paper wipers is a great example of waste reduction.



6. Sustainable fibre sourcing

Tissue products are made with more than 95% fibre. Products made with virgin fibre are derived from trees which are a renewable resource that capture carbon from the atmosphere however, deforestation is a serious concern in paper and timber supply chains, as it contributes to climate change and loss of plant and animals species. The most reliable way to ensure you are not contributing to the problem is to purchase products that are certified to the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) chain of custody program. You can be confident that products carrying the FSC logo have no deforestation in their supply chains, and that environmental and social impacts are managed from forest to manufacturing.



7. Sustainable packaging

Packaging is important for hygiene products – it keeps them clean and safe for your staff and customers, but it should be designed to reduce environmental impacts and support the circular economy. Look for packaging that has recycled content, and that you can recycle through your business recycling services. Film plastics with recycled content are a great example – they are light and efficient, contain recycled content and can be recycled. If your business does not have a film plastic recycling service, talk to your waste management provider or search for a local plastics recycling service.



8. Ethical supply chain

Do you know where your hygiene products are made? Are the factories or sources of the raw materials safe and treating their workers well? Are they underpaying workers or having them work excessive overtime? Or even using forced or child labour? Are independent audits of factories carried out? Check with your suppliers on their supply chain transparency, ethical sourcing policies and modern slavery risk management processes.



9. Buy local

Did you know that many tissue products are manufactured overseas and either imported or converted locally only? Look for products made in the local region – this not only supports local economies and jobs, but saves travel miles and carbon emissions, and you can be confident of the labour and environmental standards at the manufacturing site, and ask if they provide information via Sedex ethical data exchange tool.



10. Independent certification

To avoid greenwashing and protect your reputation it's important to prove that the products you use are what they say they are. This can be done through supplier auditing and/or credible independent third-party certifications.

Product checklist



More with less

- ☐ Dispenser/refill system has portion control to reduce consumption
- ☐ Dispenser has high capacity to reduce refill and avoid run out
- ☐ Product is high quality to avoid using too much and leaving mess
- ☐ Dispensers are quick and easy to refill



Climate impact

- ☐ Life cycle impact data (Environmental Product Declarations) are available
- ☐ Scope 3 emissions data available per product
- ☐ Product is made with a high amount of renewable energy
- ☐ Supplier has climate goals/targets and reporting



Waste reduction

- ☐ Product generates a low amount of packaging waste
- ☐ Product has AS4376 composting certification
- ☐ Packaging is recyclable
- ☐ Packaging contains recycled material
- ☐ Supplier has packaging goals/targets and reporting



Responsible sourcing

- ☐ Product is FSC chain of custody certified (or other independent certification)
- ☐ Product is made without the usage of drained tropical peatland free fibre
- ☐ Product doesn't contribute to deforestation or illegal logging
- ☐ Supplier has fibre sourcing policy with commitment and targets
- ☐ Product is made from renewable materials (vs non-renewable)



Ethical sourcing

- ☐ Product is manufactured locally/in the region
- ☐ Supplier ethical sourcing information is available through Sedex platform
- ☐ Supplier has ethical sourcing policy and issues a modern slavery statement



Sustainable manufacturing

- ☐ Manufacturing facilities have ISO 9001 Quality Management System accreditation
- ☐ Manufacturing facilities have ISO 14001 Environmental Management System accreditation
- ☐ Manufacturing facilities have AS 4801 Occupational Health and Safety Management System accreditation

Terminology

Term	Definition
Bio based	A material produced using substances derived from living organisms (biomass).
Biodegradable	Ability of material to be decomposed by bacteria or other living organisms. Term can be misleading as does not specify the conditions the material will break down in (e.g. composting) and how long it will take to break down.
Carbon footprint	The amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular product, individual, organization or community.
Circularity	Circularity aims to retain the life span of products through repair and maintenance, reusing, remanufacturing, or up-cycling. This is in contrast to linear consumption where products are made, used and disposed.
Compostable	Compostable materials will break down into natural elements within a specific time frame and in certain conditions, like those found in industrial composting facilities. Standards and independent certifications exist to prove that a product is compostable.
De-inked pulp	De-inking is an industrial process of removing printing ink from the fibres of recycled paper to make de-inked paper.
Elemental chlorine free	This process is used to manufacture paper without the use of elemental chlorine. Improvements in this technology now means that the environmental impact of ECF pulp is similar to that of TCF pulp.
End of life	A product that has reached the end of its or its useful life span.
Ethical sourcing	Products and services that are obtained in an ethical way, which includes upholding human rights, decent working conditions, health and safety, good business ethics and more.
Life cycle analysis	Life cycle analysis (LCA) is a method used to evaluate the environmental impacts of a product through its life cycle encompassing extraction and processing of the raw materials, manufacturing, distribution, use, recycling, and final disposal.
Mill broke	Paper trimmings and other paper waste generated in the paper making and converting process that is reused in the paper manufacturing process.
Modern slavery	The term is used to cover a range of exploitative practices including human trafficking, slavery, forced labour, child labour, debt bondage and slavery-like practices. This occurs in situations of exploitation where a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power.
Non renewable	A natural resource that exists in finite quantity and is not capable of being renewed or replenished e.g. Fossil fuels.
Optical brightening agents (OBAs)	Used in paper and paper coatings to make very bright and blue-white papers. OBA's do not biodegrade easily, as such some ecolabels restrict the use of them.
Tropical peatland	Tropical peatlands are wetland forests in which waterlogged conditions prevent plant material from fully decomposing, over time these conditions create a thick layer of a brown deposit resembling soil called peat that store high levels of carbon.

Term	Definition
Post consumer waste (PCR)	Material discarded after a product has been used by retail consumers, businesses, or manufacturing processes.
Pre-consumer waste	Pre-consumer waste is any material that is discarded before it reaches the consumer. This can include material trimmings, faulty items, overstock raw materials, excess inventory etc. That is brought back into the manufacturing process to be given a new life.
Process chlorine free (PCF)	This process is used to manufacture pulp from recycled paper without the use of chlorine or chlorine based bleaches. It is accepted that the paper being recycled may have been bleached with chlorine or chlorine based bleaches when it was originally produced.
Product stewardship	Product stewardship involves environmentally sound management of products and materials over their life, including at the end of their useful life.
Pulp	A fibrous material used to make paper and other reconstituted wood products. Virgin pulp is produced by mechanically or chemically separating the fibres from wood or other plant material. Recycled pulp is made from pre-consumer and/or post-consumer waste.
Recyclability	The ability to transform a product or component into its basic materials or substances and reprocessing them into new materials, including the ease with which a material can be recycled in practice and at scale.
Recycled	Previously used or processed waste paper that has been de-inked, cleaned and reconstituted into a new paper product. It can be made from pre-consumer and/or post-consumer waste.
Renewable	A natural resource or source of energy that is not depleted by use, such as water, wind, or solar power or resources that are capable of being continually replenished at a rate equal to or greater than the rate of depletion e.g. Forests.
Scope 1, 2, 3, carbon emissions	According to the Green House Gas Protocol corporate standard, a company's greenhouse gas emissions are classified into three scopes. Scope 1 – direct emissions from company operations. Scope 2 - indirect emissions from electricity purchased. Scope 3 – indirect emissions from raw materials purchased, products used and travel.
Sedex	Sedex is an online database which allows companies to store and view data on ethical and responsible business practices and is a tool for facilitating access to information.
SMETA audit	SMETA (Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit) assesses a site based on their organisations standards of labour, health and safety, environment and business ethics. Sedex believes these are key areas for assessing an organisation's responsible business practices and meeting social compliance.
Totally chlorine free (TCF)	This process is used to manufacture paper from virgin pulp without the use of chlorine or chlorine based bleaches.
Virgin fibre	Fibre that has not been previously processed or used, and is generally derived from wood, tree trimmings, raw cotton, straw, bagasse etc.

Common accreditations



Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®)

FSC certification ensures that products come from responsibly managed forests and other controlled sources that provide environmental, social and economic benefits. fsc.org



FSC RECYCLED

Products that bear this label have been verified as being made from 100% recycled content (either post-consumer or pre-consumer reclaimed materials).



EU Ecolabel

The EU Ecolabel guarantees that certified tissue paper products contain a limited amount of hazardous substances and source raw materials from sustainably managed forests or recycled materials. Tissue products with the EU Ecolabel certification are made from recycled fibre or virgin fibre from 100% responsibly managed forests. ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/



Blue Angel

Blue Angel is the world's first environmental label, originating in Germany. It sets high standards for environmentally friendly product design including low use of energy and water in the manufacturing process, made from 100% wastepaper and particularly low levels of harmful materials. blauer-engel.de/en



EPD

An Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) is an independently verified and registered document containing transparent and comparable data about the environmental impact of a product through its life cycle. epd-australasia.com



Compostable

Certified to Australian Commercial Composting Standard AS 4736. Products carrying the seedling logo have been verified they will break down into compost material with no toxic effect of the compost on plants and earthworms.



ISO 9001:2015

Quality Management System

A set of auditable standards based on a number of quality management principles including a strong customer focus, the motivation and implication of top management, the process approach and continual improvement. ISO 9001:2015 helps ensure that customers get consistent, good-quality products and services, which in turn brings many business benefits.



ISO 14001:2015

Environmental Management System

A set of auditable standards that specify the requirements for an environmental management system that an organization can use to enhance its environmental performance.



AS 4801:2001

Occupational Health and Safety Management System

A framework of auditable standards for managing occupational health and safety risks and opportunities to create a safe and healthy workplace and protect people, from physical and mental harm.