



*Safety  
Institute*

## ***ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING***

*Protecting the environment and maintaining a safe and healthy climate for patients and workers are important efforts for Premier and its members.*

  
**PREMIER**

[www.premierinc.com](http://www.premierinc.com)

REDUCING COSTS | IMPROVING QUALITY & SAFETY | MANAGING RISK

## Overview

Premier is a nationwide alliance of more than 200 not-for-profit hospitals and health systems that operate or are affiliated with approximately 1,500 hospital facilities and many other care sites. Premier provides shared resources to help its member facilities improve the quality, safety, and cost effectiveness of care. Among these services are group purchasing for supplies and equipment and support for effective supply chain management. Premier is a four-time “Champion for Change” award recipient for its leadership in helping healthcare facilities improve their environmental performance, eliminate harmful mercury, and reduce waste and toxicity. The award is given by Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E), an AHA/EPA partnership and industry wide collaborative effort designed to enhance workplace and environmental health and safety.

Environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) is a collaborative effort between Premier’s group purchasing program and the Premier Safety Institute. EPP encompasses products and packaging that are less toxic, prevent pollution, are more energy efficient, and are safer and healthier for patients, workers and the environment when compared to competing products and services. These include products that can be recycled or are biodegradable, contain less toxic and hazardous chemicals and additives, do not contain mercury, promote good indoor air quality, can be re-used or recycled to minimize waste, and reduce risks for patients, workers and the community.

In 2001, Premier implemented a focused EPP program to identify environmentally friendly products and packaging and to work with contracted suppliers and group purchasing contracting teams and committees to help ensure the availability of those products and services to members.

The purpose of the EPP program is to assist members in enhancing the safety and health of patients and healthcare workers and to support the healthcare industry’s efforts to reduce or eliminate products deemed harmful to the environment.

Premier incorporates EPP guidelines in its group contract portfolio and collaborates with companies seeking to provide EPP products. Premier gives special consideration to suppliers that support environmentally friendly products and packaging, and works actively to identify companies that can provide EPP solutions. Premier also has incorporated environmental criteria in its supplier qualification review process.

## Goals

*Premier's EPP position includes the goals of:*

- » Soliciting input from and working with member hospitals to define what environmentally preferred purchasing means on an operational level.
- » Selecting suppliers that promote products that minimize or eliminate hazardous chemicals, as defined by federal, state, and municipal agencies.
- » Including environmental criteria or questions in requests for proposal (RFPs), as appropriate.
- » Communicating the need for environmentally favorable products to contracted suppliers by addressing EPP in scheduled meetings with suppliers.

- » Working with contracted suppliers to develop/design alternative products that are environmentally preferable.
- » Assisting members in identifying environmentally preferable products under contract to meet national or federal requirements; for example, identifying alternatives to products that contain mercury.
- » Providing information to member facilities (such as approved product lists and other resources noted elsewhere in this document) about products or services that contribute to a healthier environment for patients, workers and the community.
- » Making informational resources available to members to reinforce the importance of the environmental, public health and worker safety issues related to the products and services offered.

## Activities

### Supplier review

Premier conducts an ongoing review of suppliers' corporate environmental programs, as well as a review of the environmental friendliness of their products and packaging as part of Premier's Supplier Quality Review process. (A checklist incorporated into the review is available on Premier's public Web site for any company interested in conducting a self-assessment.)

### Mercury-free pledge

Premier has pledged to eliminate mercury-containing products from its group contract portfolio. Until that goal is completely achieved, Premier will identify for its members those products that do not contain mercury. The list is available on the Premier Safety Institute Web site.

### Mercury-free pharmaceuticals

Premier has developed a comprehensive list of all mercury-containing pharmaceuticals (by NDC number) that are still in use, for purposes of handling and disposal. This list has been made publicly available on Premier's Web site.

### CEO self-assessment tool

Premier has developed, in collaboration with Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E) and Health Care Without Harm, a short assessment tool for CEOs to rate their organizations'



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pollution prevention, material purchasing, and waste management/reduction programs.

## **Web site resources**

Premier has developed extensive tools and resources, which are publicly available on the Safety Institute's public Web site. The Safety Institute home page has a direct link to EPP. Web site resource modules are available on the following topics:

- » Computers and electronics
- » Construction- green and design for safety
- » Environmentally preferable purchasing
- » Latex allergies
- » Mercury pollution prevention
- » Pharmaceutical waste management
- » Reuse of single use devices
- » Safer cleaners and pesticides
- » Sharps injury prevention

## **Supplier Web site**

Premier has a special section of its Web site devoted to news and information for our contracted suppliers. Premier's EPP program, its expectations, and commitment to eliminate mercury from contracted items are outlined in this section of the Web site for our suppliers.

## **Product lists**

Premier also has made environmental and safety product lists available to its members. Publicly accessible lists of suppliers and products are indicated by an asterisk (\*). These lists include:

- » Disaster preparedness products and equipment \*
- » Hand hygiene products \*
- » Latex-free products
- » Mercury-free products under contract \*
- » Pharmaceuticals with mercury \*
- » PVC-DEHP free products
- » Recycling
- » Sharps injury prevention devices \*
- » Waste reduction

## **H2E membership promotion**

Premier promotes the H2E program and environmental issues to its membership. As of March 2006, 124 Premier members were H2E partners.

## **eNewsletters**

Premier provides two free periodic eNewsletters: GreenLink, launched in 2006, with news about green purchasing and healthcare practices; and Safety Share, with news about patient worker and environmental safety.

## **CleanMed co-sponsorship**

Since 2000, Premier has been a supporter and co-sponsor of the annual Clean Med Conference on environmentally preferable healthcare and presented its EPP program on plenary panels.

## **Computer/electronic resources**

Premier launched, in partnership with Health Care Without Harm and the Computer Take Back Program, a special Web site on computers and electronics. The site includes resources for safe selection, use, recycling, and disposal of electronics. Premier recycled more than 2 tons of electronic equipment from its corporate offices. The Premier member Information Technology Committee used the Green Electronics Council's newly established Electronic Products Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) as part of its evaluation criteria in awarding new Computers and Electronics contracts.

## **Corporate recycling program**

Premier also is committed to reducing the amount of waste from its own offices and currently has a recycling program for paper, plastic, bottles, cans, fax toner, ink/printer cartridges, office supplies (such as paper folders and three-ring binders) and electronics.

Premier supports the efforts of our members through policies that promote socially responsible purchasing. Through efforts that reach beyond healthcare, Premier and its members work together to build a sense of responsibility for the health of their organizations and that of the communities they serve. Together, we are concerned with preserving the well being and safety of our communities by protecting the environment, assuring ethical purchasing practices, and ensuring equal opportunity for all.

## **PREMIER'S SUPPORT OF H2E'S MAJOR GOALS INCLUDE:**

- » Virtually eliminating mercury-containing waste from the healthcare waste stream;
- » Reducing the overall volume of waste (both regulated and non-regulated waste); and
- » Identifying hazardous substances for pollution prevention and waste reduction opportunities, including hazardous chemicals and persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic pollutants.



• 12225 El Camino Real  
San Diego, CA 92130

• T 858 481 2727  
F 858 481 8919

• 2320 Cascade Pointe Blvd (28208)  
P.O. Box 668800  
Charlotte, NC 28266-8800

• T 704 357 0022  
F 704 357 6611

• 444 N Capitol Street NW  
Suite 625  
Washington, DC 20001-1511

• T 202 393 0860  
F 202 393 6499

[premierinc.com](http://premierinc.com)