

## It's Good Business to Buy Recycled

**Eric Nelson**

Recycled Product Procurement Coordinator

King County Purchasing Agency, 500 4th Avenue # 620, Seattle Washington 98104

The rapid growth of recycling programs threatens the stability of the very markets upon which recycling depends. Strong recycled -material collection systems require equally strong markets for recyclables to remain viable. In support of the development of recycled material markets, King County has developed a recycled product procurement policy requiring County agencies to purchase products manufactured with recycled materials wherever practicable. King County purchases recycled products and materials valued at over 1 million dollars per year. The successes of our "Buy Recycled" program may serve as a useful model for businesses, since environmentally sound practices are important to customers and may represent marketing opportunities:

- Recycled paper is used for all stationery, business cards, photocopying, and printing, and the chasing arrow logo identifies the recycled content of all printed materials.
- Re-refined motor oil is used by all County vehicle fleets and a "Follow-My-Lead" bumper sticker advertises this program. Used oil is returned for re-refining.
- Re-refined antifreeze is used in all vehicles and is recycled to avoid toxic waste disposal.
- Composted municipal yard waste is used as a soil amendment in County road projects.
- Recycled concrete aggregate is used as a temporary road surface or granular fill.
- Recycled plastic lumber is used in place of treated lumber in an increasing number of soil and water contact applications.

Many local, state, and federal government agencies are offering product development grants to businesses for assistance in developing and testing recycled material applications. Although these grant programs are rarely opportunities for direct profits, they can lead to valuable publicity for a business. These agencies also offer award programs that can bring useful publicity to a business. A commitment to support the development of local recycled product industries by trying out new products can also reveal some useful new materials, such as anti-pathogen compost products or recycled plastic lumber.

The complete text of the annual report of the King County recycled product procurement program and a model procurement policy may be obtained from the King County Purchasing Agency.