

Palo Alto Unified School District

CHEMICAL GUIDELINES

In light of BP 3514 and AR 3514, and in light of the harmful health impacts associated with exposures to chemicals found in commonly used consumer products, these guidelines are developed to provide fundamental action steps to ensure the:

- Enhancement of student learning by providing a healthy school environment;
- Reduction in the amount of hazardous materials and chemicals used, released, and exposed to students and staff;
- Improvement of Indoor Air Quality in classrooms and other rooms district wide; and
- Reduction of occupational exposures to chemicals of concern.

Accordingly, these guidelines establish “best practices” for PAUSD and are NOT to replace any existing accommodations for students. Specifically, PAUSD will purchase products that are inherently less toxic for human health and the environment and identify less-hazardous products that prohibit or limit chemicals that can cause harm, create indoor air pollution, or lead to other environmental or human health problems. Accordingly, these guidelines will be incorporated into the Purchasing, Maintenance, and Operational practices throughout the district.

CLEANING

Purchasing

In alignment with California law (Public Contract Code sections 12400-12404), school districts are encouraged to practice Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP). EPP is the procurement of goods and services that have a reduced impact on human health and the environment as compared to other goods and services serving the same purpose. PAUSD will purchase:

- Fragrance-free cleaning products certified by Green Seal or EcoLogo;
- Fragrance-free, non-antibacterial hand soaps certified by Green Seal or EcoLogo; and
- Disinfectants and sanitizers certified by EcoLogo or U.S. EPA’s Design for the Environment Antimicrobial Pesticide Pilot Project or recommended by the San Francisco Department of the Environment. Disinfectants and sanitizers should:
 - Have a “0” rating on the Hazardous Materials Identification System (HMIS) health rating scale;
 - Use hydrogen peroxide, citric acid, or lactic acid as the active ingredient;
 - Not contain bleach;
 - Not include the signal words “Danger” or “Warning” on the product label; and
 - Be approved for food contact surfaces (for sanitizers).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the California Department of Public Health identify acute and chronic health effects, including, but not limited to, headaches, eye, nose, and throat irritation, skin rashes, and asthma, that can be caused by disinfectants. Accordingly, PAUSD will:

- Prohibit the purchase and use of all **disinfecting wipes**, e.g., Clorox and Lysol disinfecting wipes (the most commonly used in PAUSD), which contain quaternary ammonium compounds, or asthma-causing substances. We encourage the continued reliance on PAUSD Nursing Services and Custodial Services, as well as the on-going development and implementation of these Chemical Guidelines, for the best means and methods for safe and healthy cleaning products and practices.
- Discourage the purchase and use of **hand and baby wipes** for hand washing, surface cleaning, or any other purpose, except in special circumstances, such as the removal of allergen residue. (*Note - the most common hand and baby wipes contain formaldehyde-releasing preservatives that contribute to the development of contact allergies and may cause skin rashes.*)
- Encourage the use of hand washing with soap and water over the use of wipes or hand sanitizers as the preferred hand cleaning method. (*Note - according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), washing hands with regular soap and water is the most effective way to prevent the transmission of infections. Hand sanitizers do not remove dirt, leaving germs trapped under the dirt.*)

However, if **hand and baby wipes** are needed, it is recommended that the following products, which contain the least-harmful ingredients, be used:

- ✓ **The Honest Wipes**, or
- ✓ **Clean Well All-Natural Hand Sanitizing Wipes.**

Practices

PAUSD will adopt and encourage practices that reduce or eliminate the use of toxic chemicals that may contribute to Indoor Air Quality problems, which could result in harmful exposures to students, staff, and others. To this end, PAUSD will direct:

- Custodial staff to disinfect only high-touch areas (e.g., door knobs, sink faucets), as the combination of all-purpose cleaners, microfiber cloths, and friction removes most germs from other surfaces.
- Custodial staff to remove all chemical-based cleaning products that are either not supplied by or not approved for use in the district, effective March 1, 2015.
- Custodial staff to remove air fresheners, scented candles, incense, and other plug-in devices used to control odor that are found on PAUSD campuses, effective March 1, 2015.
- Custodial staff to use vacuums with HEPA filtration or filters with equivalent efficiency.
- Custodial staff to use microfiber cloths and mops for optimal cleaning and more effective germ elimination.
- Campuses to utilize dirt-grabbing walk-off mats inside and outside classroom and building entrances.

ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

Background

Computers and other office equipment can contain heavy metals, such as lead and mercury, and toxic flame-retardants, as well as other hazardous chemical ingredients that can expose workers when these products are manufactured or handled at the end of their useful life. These and other harmful substances also can be released into the school's indoor environment as contaminated dust or emissions.

The Electronic Products Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) is a comprehensive global rating system that helps purchasers identify environmentally preferable computers and other electronics. EPEAT-registered products meet strict environmental criteria that address the full product lifecycle, from energy conservation and toxic materials to product longevity and end-of-life management. With fewer toxic chemicals, more efficient operation, and easier-to-recycle components, EPEAT-registered products offer reduced environmental impacts across their life cycle.

Purchasing

- For product categories for which an EPEAT standard exists, PAUSD will prefer electronic products that have achieved EPEAT Silver or EPEAT Gold registration, provided the products meet PAUSD's educational requirements.

Practices

- PAUSD IT will contract with a certified e-Stewards recycler that adheres to the *e-Stewards Standard for Responsible Recycling and Reuse of Electronic Equipment*, the highest standard of environmental responsibility and worker protection. PAUSD IT will handle all equipment recycling.

PAINTS, FINISHES, AND ADHESIVES

- PAUSD will use zero- or low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) products, including, but not limited to, paints, finishes, and adhesives, referring to Green Seal or EcoLogo for certified paints and Green Guard for certified finishes and adhesives.

FURNITURE

Furniture procurement for PAUSD occurs primarily through the district's centralized purchasing department. Purchases made directly by PAUSD site staff should be coordinated with the purchasing department to ensure the best product and price are obtained and to achieve conformity with the following guidelines. PAUSD will prefer:

- Green Guard certified furniture, which verifies that formaldehyde and other VOC emission levels are low.
- Solid wood furniture rather than plywood, pressed wood, particleboard, and medium density fiberboard (MDF). To the extent this is not feasible, composite wood products should be completely sealed to avoid off-gassing.
- Furniture not coated with polyurethane, a respiratory toxin.

- Furniture not made from polyvinylchloride (PVC) plastic.
- Furniture not treated with stain-resistant chemical products such as Stainmaster and Scotchguard, which contain pre-fluorinated chemicals (PFCs).
- Flame retardant free furniture, to the extent permitted by law.

(Date: 1-29-2015-Rev. 0)