Environmental Considerations for Laundry Detergents and Laundry Services

Some or all of the suggested questions below can be used in your RFI or RFP to identify environmental considerations of the products and services. Purchasers may use the responses to score the supplier or may decide to use the questions as specifications to require suppliers meet them.

#	Product Questions	Preferred Answer	Rationale: Why ask suppliers this question?	Other considerations or options for this question
1.	Is this product Green Seal or EcoLogo certified to meet laundry product standards? (Yes/No/NA)	Yes	Green Seal standards GS-51 Standard for Laundry Care Products for Industrial and Institutional Use (or GS-48 for Household Use) cover performance as well as many human health and environmental attributes. It prohibits the use of specific components, including phthalates, triclosan and halogenated organic solvents. More information can be found at http://www.greenseal.org/GreenBusiness/Standards.aspx?vid=ViewStandardDetail&cid=0&sid=43 EcoLogo certified laundry products meet EcoLogo's CCD 105 Standard.	The Green Seal standard covers laundry detergent products as well as pre-treatment stain and spot removing products, softening products, laundry additives, fabric refresher, anti-wrinkle products, laundry prewash and starch/sizing/fabric finish products. It does not cover the facility where laundry care occurs nor the equipment used. This standard includes products used in laundries for health care and food settings. It includes fabric protectant products but does not address impregnating products with flame retardants or waterproofing properties.
If not Green Seal or EcoLogo-certified, please answer the following additional questions:				
2.	Does this product have a full ingredient list available? (Yes/No) If yes, is it available publicly?	Yes/Yes	Facilities may prefer products for which a full and complete ingredient list is available, because it will assist the facility industrial hygienist in the case of an occupational health incident, or if facilities wish to compare products to choose the least toxic.	Initiatives in other states are demanding suppliers disclose ingredients in consumer cleaning products, particularly if they cause nerve damage or hormone disruption, see http://www.eany.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=272:groups-applaud-progress-on-cleaning-product-chemical-right-to-know-effort&catid=41:press-releases&Itemid=80.
3.	Is this product's packaging recyclable(according to FTC Green Guides)? (Yes/No)	Yes	Unqualified recyclable claims are defined by the FTC Green Guides: "*When recycling facilities are available to a substantial majority of consumer or communities (at least 60%) where the item is sold.*"	Recyclable packaging will minimize waste and associated costs for health care facilities.

4.	Does this packaging contain postconsumer recycled content? (Yes/No)	Yes	Post-consumer material is an end product that has completed its life cycle as a consumer item and would otherwise have been disposed of as a solid waste. Post-consumer materials include recyclables collected in commercial and residential recycling programs, such as office paper, cardboard, aluminum cans, plastics and metals. Preconsumer materials – those that have not reached the consumer and are incorporated back into the product - are commonly used in manufacturing processes therefore have not been highlighted in this question.	Using postconsumer materials in product supports closing the loop and helps build demand for recyclable materials.
5.	Is the product's packaging free of PVC or any chlorinated materials? (Yes/No)	Yes	Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) shall be defined as a plastic polymer used in a wide array of products.	PVC is hard and brittle at room temperature. A plasticizer (softener) is typically added to increase the flexibility of the polymer. DEHP is the plasticizer for most PVC medical devices. Production and incineration of PVC releases dioxin, a carcinogen, which accumulates in the environment.
6.	Is this product free of alkyphenol ethoxylates (APEOs) or their derivatives, including nonylphenol (NP) and nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEs)? (Yes/No)	Yes	APEOs are a broad class of nonionic surfactants, including NPEs (nonylphenol ethoxylates) and nonylphenol (NP). APEO's are associated with hormone disruption in water bodies where they are released after sewage treatment. NP is persistent in the aquatic environment, moderately bioaccumulative, and extremely toxic to aquatic organisms. NP has also been shown to exhibit estrogenic properties in in vitro and in vivo assays. NP's main use is in the manufacture of NPEs. NPEs are nonionic surfactants that are used in a wide variety of industrial applications and consumer products. Many of these, such as laundry detergents, are "down-the-drain" applications. NPEs, though less toxic and persistent than NP, are also highly toxic to aquatic organisms, and, in the environment, degrade into NP.	Textile Rental Services Association of America (TRSA) agreed to expedite a phase-out of NPEs in industrial laundry detergents. The phase out, which has already begun, is being coordinated with EPA's DfE Safer Detergents Stewardship Initiative (SDSI) program and would end the use of NPEs in industrial laundry detergents by 2013 for liquid detergents and 2014 for powder detergents. EPA is considering both voluntary and regulatory action on NP and NPEs.

7.	Is the product free of all chemicals listed on Prop 65, California's Safe Drinking Water Act, that are carcinogenic and reproductive toxins?	Yes	The California Proposition 65 list is an authoritative government list of carcinogens and reproductive toxicants. Health Care facilities may wish to avoid products containing these chemicals.	You could consider asking suppliers to list, in the response, any chemicals in the products that appear on the Proposition 65 list, instead of responding with a simple Yes or No. You could also provide the Proposition 65 list with the bid materials. Or, Practice Greenhealth could provide you with the list of individual chemicals that might be in cleaners, which you could then provide to suppliers instead of giving them the entire Proposition 65 list. http://oehha.ca.gov/prop65/prop65_list/Newlist.html
8.	Is this product free of reactive chlorine compounds, e.g. sodium hypochlorite or organic chlorine compounds? (Yes/No)	Yes	A recent European study indicated that sodium hypochlorite and organic chemicals (e.g., surfactants, fragrances) contained in several household cleaning products can react to generate chlorinated volatile organic compounds (VOCs).[i] These chlorinated compounds are emitted during cleaning applications, some of which are toxic and probable human carcinogens.	
9.	Does this product contain less than 0.5% phosphates? (Yes/No)	Yes	Phosphates are used in laundry detergents as "builders" or water softeners.	Too many phosphates in water can lead to eutrophication which can be detrimental to fish and plant life.[ii] http://water.epa.gov/type/rsl/monitoring/vms56.cfm
10	Are the ingredients in this product readily biodegradable? (Yes/No)	Yes	"Readily biodegradable" is determined using one of the methods described in OECD Guidelines for the Testing of Chemicals, provided that all measurements and calculations are based on the carbon content of the mixture and its degradation, i.e. dissolved organic carbon (DOC) removal (301A or 301E), CO2 evolution (301-B) or oxygen consumption in the presence of an inhibitor of nitrogen metabolism (301C, 301D or 301F)	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has developed test guidelines for determining biodegradability: OECD 301. A substance that is 'readily' biodegradeable has successfully passed an OECD screening test, showing that more than 60% has biodegraded over a 28 day period when exposed to certain micro organisms. For more information on OECD Guidelines, see http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/38/2/5598432.pdf.

	Service-Specific Questions	Preferred Answer	Rationale: Why Ask Suppliers this Question?	Other Considerations
1.	Do you use ozone technology instead of chlorine bleach? (Yes/No)	Yes	Chlorine bleach creates dioxin in its manufacture. Dioxin is one of the most toxic chemicals known to man, according to the EPA. Alternative, such as ozone technology, are readily available.	
2.	Do you use laundry chemicals which are effective at low temperatures? (Yes/No)	Yes	The use of low or cooler water temperatures helps lower energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. Products are available	
3.	Does your company use Energy Star rated equipment? (Yes/No) If yes, what percentage of washers and dryers used are Energy Star rated?	Yes/highest %	Energy Star rated equipment use less energy than comparable products.	
4.	Do you use alternative energy sources, such as solar power, for hot water heating? If yes, what percentage of the total energy consumed is from alternatives (excludes coal, natural gas, nuclear).	Yes/%	Companies that use alternative energy sources are reducing the environmental impact and conserving resources.	
5.	Do you use fuel efficient transportation for pickup and delivery of laundry items or are you an EPA SmartWay Partner? (Yes/No)	Yes	Fuel efficient transportation (including hybrids and electric vehicles) means vehicles that exceed 27 miles/gallon for cars and 24 miles/gal for light trucks as defined by the US Federal government and may increase. Commercial fleets that are EPA SmartWay partners demonstrate their commitment to fuel efficiency	
6.	Do you use recyclable or reusable packaging? (Yes/No)	Yes		
7.	Do you take back packaging, such as films, boxes and hangers, for reuse or recycling? (Yes/No)	Yes		

Practice Greenhealth thanks its EPP Supporters for their contributions to the creation of this resource.

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[i] Odabasi, M., *Halogenated Volatile Organic Compounds from the Use of Chlorine-Bleach- Containing Household Products*, Environmental Science & Technology 42, 1445-1451, (2008). Available at: http://pubs.acs.org/journals/esthag/

[ii] Brice A, *Is Phasing Out of Phosphates the Answer for the Detergent Sector?,* http://www.icis.com/Articles/2008/06/23/9133127/is-phasing-out-phosphates-the-answer-for-detergents-sector.html, June 2008