



Sample Letter to Hospital Group Purchasing Organization Requesting Less-Toxic Products

Minnesota Technical Assistance Program ■ RESOURCE

Dear <insert name>:

As a health care provider deeply committed to public health, <insert your hospital's name> is re-examining the ways in which our operations affect our community. In particular, given the link between environmental quality and health, we are seeking to reduce the size of <insert your hospital's name>'s "environmental footprint."

<insert your hospital's name> is interested in procuring safe and cost-effective medical products whose manufacture does not produce mercury—a heavy metal—or persistent, bioaccumulative toxin (PBTs) emissions; which do not contain such materials; and which do not produce them when disposed or treated.

In June 1998, the American Hospital Association and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the goal of reducing the volume and toxicity of the medical waste stream. The partnership is now Hospitals for a Healthy Environment. Specific goals include reducing total volume of waste by 33 percent by 2005 and 50 percent by 2010; virtually eliminating mercury-containing waste by 2005; and minimizing other PBTs produced by the medical sector.

These goals are to be achieved through pollution prevention measures, such as the purchase of non-toxic medical products. Accordingly, we are asking <insert your GPO name> to inform us how you can help us and other members who wish to comply with the Memorandum of Understanding. Specifically, given the serious health risks posed by mercury and dioxins—highly potent persistent bioaccumulative toxins produced when polyvinyl chloride (PVC) is manufactured and incinerated—we are seeking <insert your GPO name>'s responses to the following questions:

- Which products that <insert your hospital's name> purchases from <insert your GPO name> contain mercury or PVC?
- Does <insert your GPO name> offer versions of these products that do not contain these materials, and if so, what are they?
- If <insert your GPO name> does not currently offer non-toxic versions of these products, does it plan to do so in the future?
- Is <insert your GPO name> willing to allow members to purchase non-toxic products off-contract without incurring financial penalties in doing so?

We appreciate your response to this inquiry. All sectors of the health care industry must cooperate with one another if the significant benefits to public health envisioned by Memorandum of Understanding are to be realized. The environmental consequences of medical product purchasing can no longer be ignored. We look forward to working with you to achieve these worthwhile goals.

Sincerely,

Developed by the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy's Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) Task Force and provided by MnTAP.

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