Making the difference.

Pollution Prevention Assistance & Product Replacement Program

2023–2025 Biennial Report
July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025

Welcome.

Whether it's a large-scale manufacturer or a family-owned shop, most businesses produce some amount of hazardous waste or use products with harmful chemicals. While large companies have expertise in hazardous waste management, small businesses and community organizations are less likely to have dedicated specialists with regulatory experience to protect their employees, communities, and the environment.

Take into consideration that Washington is home to over 670,000 small businesses and the opportunity for positive change adds up quickly. When you include nonprofit organizations, together they employ over 60% of Washington's workforce—employees who could be in danger of exposure to improperly managed hazardous waste, toxic products, or spills that pollute our environment including streams. lakes, and the Puget Sound.

That's how we make a difference.

We've built a network of local partners spanning the state who specialize in pollution prevention. Together we proactively help more than 3,000 small businesses and organizations each year through free, hands-on technical assistance, financial support, and education tailored to the needs of the communities we serve. We develop projects to help businesses and organizations replace products that contain some of the worst chemicals with safer options that benefit people and the planet.

When we look forward, we see an opportunity to make a big difference. We envision a Washington where all small businesses and local organizations can get the support they need to grow a healthy economy and environment.

We hope you'll join us.

How we're making a difference

Pollution Prevention Assistance

Pollution Prevention Assistance (PPA) is a partnership with 29 local municipalities that provides free, hands-on technical assistance to help small businesses better manage their hazardous waste with solutions that are right for the business and the environment.

PPA partners proactively visit their local neighborhoods. Any business that is interested can also request a free visit through our website, ecology.wa.gov/PPA.

We help businesses:

- Adopt safer material-handling and storage practices.
- Manage interior and exterior drainage systems to reduce impacts on stormwater.
- Plan for spill prevention.
- Use fewer toxics in their processes or replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives.

Click here to learn more about how we've grown!

2023–2025 in Review: Growth

This biennium was a period of growth for PPA. Technical assistance visits increased by 12% over the last biennium. Several new municipalities expressed their interest in expanding the partnership. Overall, we see these as signs that more people are learning about the benefits of PPA.

Meanwhile, we welcomed three new team members to help us manage the growth. And during a period of significant turnover among our partners' staff, we took the opportunity to revisit our onboarding process and initiated a plan to better support new specialists.

Thanks to that work, today we have an even stronger foundation to meet the needs of Washington's growing small business sector.

Andy Maher,
Pollution Prevention Assistance Coordinator

Product Replacement Program

The Product Replacement Program (PRP) provides technical assistance and funding to help organizations switch to safer alternatives for products containing some of the worst chemicals. Each project addressed the unique challenges of safely removing toxic products from a given sector.

PRP projects included:

- **PERC dry cleaner project**: Removed highly toxic perchloroethylene (PERC) solvents.
- **Auto shop degreaser project**: Replaced solvents harmful to people and the environment.
- **Thermal receipt paper project**: Helped stores switch to bisphenol-free paper.
- **PCBs fluorescent light project**: Removed dangerous polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in schools.
- **AFFF firefighting foam project**: Helped safely dispose of foam containing harmful PFAS.
- **Recreational foam pilot**: Tested safe removal and cleaning methods for gyms with foam block pits containing toxic flame retardants.
- **Turf assessment**: Studied the environmental impact of chemicals in turf fields.
- **Safer Salons pilot**: Tested ways to help barbers and stylists switch to safer hair care products.

Click here to learn more about our innovation!

2023–2025 in Review: Innovation

PRP is an opportunity to innovate by testing ways to help businesses safely remove harmful products from the workplace. Over the last two years we partnered with airports to reduce their use of hazardous AFFF foam. We explored methods to replace thermal receipt paper in stores with safer alternatives. We also grew our reach among auto shop owners and dry cleaners interested in safer products.

We also started planning for the next biennium with several exciting new opportunities. PRP launched a pioneering pilot to replace toxic flame-retardant foam blocks. We began outreach to fire departments to address their AFFF firefighting foam stockpiles. We commissioned a study of turf fields environmental impacts. And we helped develop a pilot project focused on cosmetic products to launch on 2026.

Sean Smith,
Product Replacement Program Coordinator

Specialist spotlight

“We often get to connect people to resources that they might otherwise be unaware of or need support in accessing. There are many folks who want to do the right thing but don’t necessarily know how or where to start. We help them identify issues and then work to reduce any barriers they might experience along the way.”

Fern Singer
Pollution Prevention Technician,
City of Bellingham
Public Works Department

“By helping local businesses understand the why and how of proper waste management, we’re not only protecting public health and the environment, but we are also making Washington cleaner, healthier, and more resilient for the future.”

Vikki Barthels
Environmental Health Specialist II,
Spokane Regional Health District

“Specialists effect change one problem at a time versus one citation at a time. What might seem obvious to environmental professionals may not be clear or align with the opinion of the general public. Our role as educators is to provide knowledge that creates the change we seek.”

Kevin Manzano
Stormwater Specialist,
City of Longview

“What makes PPA so rewarding is we start from shared values. We all want clean water, a resilient local economy, and a city our families can be proud of. PPA allows us to work collaboratively with businesses in our community towards practical solutions that protect the environment while supporting economic success. It’s a partnership built on trust, respect, and shared commitment.”

Howard Carlseen
Hydrologic Source Control & Pollution Prevention Assistance,
City of Port Angeles

Goal one: Engage small businesses and local organizations.

Working with communities in a non-regulatory manner means we proactively reach out to small businesses and local organizations. Through in-person visits and calls, we help them solve challenges they may not even be aware of yet. That takes trust and a commitment to building relationships in the areas we serve. The number of engagements we achieve reflects our commitment and the trust we're building in communities across the state.

How we're engaging:

We visited 6,062 businesses and organizations. Our specialists made a **total of 8,348 visits** to these businesses—this represents a **12% increase in visits** compared to the previous biennium. The types of visits included:

- **1,066 screening visits**, which helps specialists determine if a business needs assistance.
- **5,200 assistance visits**, which includes our full assessment of the opportunities a business could enact to improve environmental outcomes.
- **2,082 follow up visits**, which are an opportunity to check progress and further assist businesses with any changes they decided to implement.

Helping communities in need

32% of PPA visits were in communities that experience greater environmental health disparities.*

*Communities that rank 8 or above on Washington State Department of Health's Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map.[1]

[1] https://doh.wa.gov/data-and-statistical-reports/washington-tracking-network-wtn/washington-environmental-health-disparities-map

Most common business sectors visited by PPA

- **27% Dining & hospitality** (2,249 businesses)
- **25% Automotive services** (2,098 businesses)
- **8% Grocery & retail** (662 businesses)
- **5% Medical & personal care** (447 businesses)

CASE STUDY: Helping new owners become new stewards in their community.

A new business can be an opportunity to start best practices that can last a lifetime. That's exactly what Alyssa Hendren, a PPA Specialist from Jefferson County Public Health did when she learned about a new business opening their doors in Port Townsend. Social Fabric Brewing was scheduled for a standard change-of-ownership food safety inspection and Alyssa took the opportunity to join and introduce herself to the new owner.

"Integrating PPA visits during that critical setup period means we make it more efficient for the business owner," said Hendren. "We're able to build better relationships with the owners by minimizing site visits."

Owner and brewer Levi Liberty welcomed Hendren into his brewery, providing a full tour of the operations, including preparation and storage areas. The brewery had drums of new product including chemicals for the chillers and chemicals for pH balancing of process water. Hendren provided a spill pallet for the 55-gallon drum of wastewater that was stored outside prior to being neutralized and disposed of. Hendren also provided them with a spill kit and discussed steps to take if an accidental spill occurred.

"Good beer starts with quality natural resources, which is why environmental stewardship matters to us," Liberty shared. "Every day we look for ways to use water, energy, and raw materials more efficiently while minimizing waste."

"We're always looking for ways to make it easier for business owners to make positive changes," said Hendren. "I think that's what makes PPA work."

Goal two: Protect community health and safety.

Helping small businesses and local organizations solve challenges to make their staff, community, and the environment healthier is what drives our work. We know that small changes can make a big difference for the business, and by working together it adds up to real change for Washington.

How we're protecting:

- PRP completed 284 product replacement projects.
- PPA helped businesses make 2,556 improvements during site visits.

Most common issues PPA specialists helped businesses with:

- **59% Needed spill response plans or materials** (1,509 instances)
- **8% Needed proper labeling on dangerous waste containers** (207 instances)
- **7% Needed storm drain system maintenance** (190 instances)
- **26% Other issues**

Product replacement projects included:

- **11 dry cleaners** replaced or decommissioned their PERC equipment (97 since launch).
- **75 auto shops** replaced solvent-based auto degreasers with safer products (182 since launch).
- **2 airports** purchased AFFF test box systems (7 since launch).
- **3 businesses** replaced their bisphenol containing thermal receipts.
- **2 gyms** replaced their flame retardant containing foam cubes during the pilot study.
- **91 fire departments** signed up for the AFFF disposal program.

CASE STUDY: Collaborating on solutions right for business and the environment.

Each location PPA visits has their own unique challenge when it comes to hazardous waste. In the bustling commercial hubs of Federal Way, PPA specialists encounter a wide array of questions from owners and managers in varied sectors and often all in the span of a day.

“We’ve learned to expect the unexpected,” said Keilan Nelson, a PPA and Water Quality Specialist for the City of Federal Way. “But we love the challenge of helping businesses find solutions that work for them. It’s always great when they realize the solution is a simple change that will help them better protect their business, staff, and the environment.”

One of those challenges is the fact that not all hazardous waste is obvious. While products with dangerous chemicals should be clearly marked, the harmful effects of some waste may not be so apparent. For businesses in the restaurant sector like the Arby’s on 16th Avenue in Federal Way, that meant common grease waste.

If stored fats, oils, and grease spill into storm drains, it can wreak havoc on waterways and kill fish and wildlife. If that waste is improperly disposed of down the drain, it hardens in the pipes and can cause flooding and costly repairs for the business.

“We walked the property with the manager. We found a 55-gallon grease drum overflowing due to rain.” Keilan reported. “She told us It had been there for a few years. So, while the manager worked on proper disposal of the drum, we helped to prevent any additional discharges by securely covering the drum and we deployed absorbent pads and a boom to prevent grease from entering the storm drain. When we followed up later, they were happy to show us they took action. The drum was gone and the area clear of any spills.”

Goal three: Support positive change.

The community business owners and organization managers we work with often lack the resources of larger corporations. That's where we come in. We help connect them to local specialists at no charge through our regional partners, and we provide financial incentives to switch to safer, less toxic products. Our goal is to lower the barrier to healthier behavior and plant the seed for long-term change.

How we're enabling change:

PPA reinvested **$6.3M** in Washington communities.

Supporting metrics:

PRP provided $948K for safe toxic product removal, replacement, and disposal. Notable product replacement projects include:

- **$289K Dry cleaners**
- **$437K Degreasers**
- **$184K Foam blocks**
- **$2K Thermal receipts**

CASE STUDY: Helping dry cleaners cut the cord on toxic solvents.

Ecology's Product Replacement Program has helped 11 local drycleaning shops, like Blue Star Cleaners in Battle Ground, WA, make the switch to safer, more sustainable cleaning methods since July 1, 2023.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandated dry cleaners phase out the use of PERC which is linked to health concerns like cancer and damage to the liver and kidneys. Our work began after it was discovered that dry cleaners were disposing solvents containing perchloroethylene (PERC) by misting it from their machines. However, finding alternatives to these commonly used products wasn't a simple proposition for Washington small business owners. In some cases, new equipment that did not require PERC products was needed.

"We faced hard choices. And a big learning curve," said Benito Sanchez, owner of Blue Star Cleaners.

Ecology launched the PERC replacement project to help small business owners manage the change with up to $40,000 in reimbursement for transitioning to professional wet cleaning or hydrocarbon options.

Over the course of the project, PRP was able to support small businesses with a total of $2.1 million in reimbursements. That support can make all the difference to local economies where every small business counts.

When asked if he would do it again, Mr. Sanchez replied simply, "PRP kept us in business."

Who we are

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PPA partners

- City of Bellingham
- Bothell, City of
- Chelan-Douglas Health District
- Clark County Public Health
- Clark County Public Works
- Federal Way, City of
- Island County Public Health
- City of Issaquah
- Jefferson County Public Health
- King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
- City of Kirkland
- Kitsap Public Health District
- Kittitas County Public Health Department
- City of Lakewood
- City of Longview
- City of Port Angeles
- City of Puyallup
- City of Redmond
- Seattle Public Utilities
- City of Shoreline
- Skagit County Public Health
- Snohomish County Health Department
- Spokane Regional Health District
- City of Sumner
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Thurston County Public Health
- City of Vancouver
- Whatcom County Health Department