

WVU POLLUTION PREVENTION NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026

Welcome to this edition of the WVU Pollution Prevention Newsletter. This issue highlights insights from the Safer Choice survey conducted by the WVU Pollution Prevention Team, showing that while some consumers perceive price and availability as barriers, these concerns may be smaller than they first appear. Many Safer Choice-certified products are now available at prices comparable to conventional alternatives and can often be found in common retail stores and online platforms rather than only in specialty markets. Overall, the survey suggests that improving product visibility, labeling, and consumer education could help reduce hesitation and encourage wider adoption of Safer Choice products.

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WHAT IS POLLUTION PREVENTION



Pollution Prevention (P2) is one of the key approaches towards an initiative to improve the energy efficiency and productivity of key industries while prioritizing environmental sustainability. The initiative focuses on reducing or preventing pollution at its source.

The primary objective of our Pollution Prevention program is to provide technical assistance to Small and Medium Enterprises in **key industries** in West Virginia by assisting with the identification, development, and implementation of P2 methods. The recommendations provided to the industries are designed to help the business lower operational costs by reducing expenditures, water and energy usage, waste, and disposal costs, while at the same time maintaining and often improving productivity.

Key Industries:

1. Food and Beverage Manufacturing and Processing
2. Chemical Manufacturing, Processing, and Formulation
3. Automotive Manufacturing and Maintenance
4. Aerospace Product and Parts Manufacturing and Maintenance
5. Metal Manufacturing and Fabrication

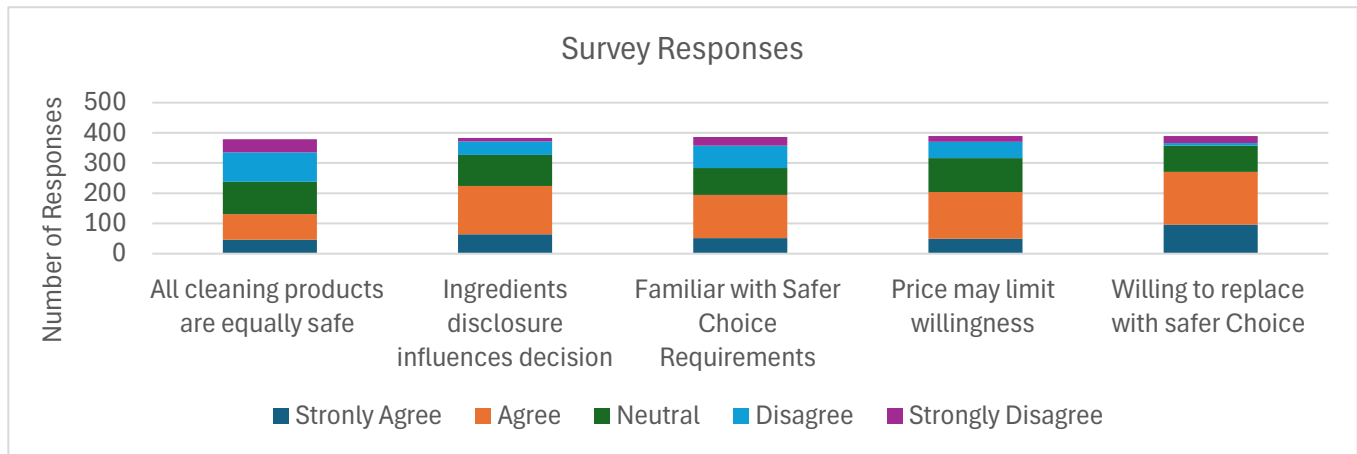
OUR SERVICES

1. **Pollution Prevention Assessments:** The project team will make a planned visit to your facility to assess and gather data on energy, water, material, and personnel use. Assessment data, along with input from the facility managers, will be used to develop P2 recommendations. A detailed report based on the findings will be submitted to the facility shortly after the on-site assessment.
2. **Energy Audits/Assessments:** Applying for a USDA-REAP grant and need an assessment? Want to save money? The project team will visit your facility and identify opportunities to improve energy efficiency. A detailed report will be provided to the business, including estimates of implementation costs, energy use savings, energy cost savings, and simple payback period for each identified opportunity.
3. **Training Workshops:** Training workshops will be conducted to help businesses learn P2 Best Practices, tools, techniques, and resources available, and how to modify their process or site to improve energy efficiency, productivity, and environmental sustainability.
4. **Technical Assistance:** The project team can provide on-site or off-site technical assistance on a variety of industrial concerns related to topics including pollution prevention, energy efficiency, sustainability, environmental impact, and process improvement. Contact us for assistance!
5. **USDA-REAP Application Assistance:** Applying for grant funding can be a challenge, especially for the small businesses that do not have an expert at grant-writing on the payroll. Our project team can help you navigate the application process and assist with completing the application for USDA-REAP funding.

POLLUTION PREVENTION FOCUS

Insights from the survey: Price and Availability of Safer Choice Products

Although some survey respondents identified price and product availability as barriers to adopting Safer Choice-certified products, these concerns may be smaller in practice than they first appear. The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) states that Safer Choice products are designed to help consumers identify products with safer chemical ingredients without sacrificing quality or performance. EPA also provides a public product search tool, which makes it easier for consumers and institutions to identify certified products by category and brand.



One of the main concerns raised in the survey was cost. Many consumers assume that products labeled as safer or more environmentally responsible must come at a premium price. However, this is not always the case. In today's market, many Safer Choice-certified products are sold at prices comparable to conventional household cleaners. Some are only slightly more expensive, while others are similarly priced or even cheaper depending on the brand, retailer, product size, and promotions available at the time of purchase. This suggests that price differences are often not large enough to be a major barrier for all consumers. When viewed in this way, the cost concern may be more about consumer expectation than actual affordability.

Availability is another barrier that deserves closer attention. Safer Choice products are no longer limited to specialty stores or niche markets. Many of these items are now available in major retail stores, department stores, supermarkets, and online platforms that consumers already use regularly. This means that, in many cases, shoppers can find Safer Choice products alongside conventional alternatives in familiar shopping locations. The issue may therefore be less about whether the products are available and more about whether consumers know how to identify them.

This is where awareness becomes especially important. If consumers do not recognize the Safer Choice label, they may overlook these products even when they are already on the shelf in front of them. Similarly, if they are not familiar with which brands carry the certification, they may assume safer products are rare or hard to access. As a result, the barrier is not only economic or logistical, but also informational. Better outreach, clearer labeling, and more consumer education could help reduce these concerns and improve adoption.

Overall, while price and availability were identified as challenges in the survey, these barriers should not be viewed as fixed obstacles. In many cases, Safer Choice products are competitively priced and increasingly accessible through common retail channels. Strengthening public awareness and improving product visibility may be just as important as addressing cost itself. This suggests that expanding education and communication around Safer Choice products could play a key role in encouraging broader consumer adoption.

HIGHLIGHTING OUR IMPACT

The WVU Pollution Prevention (P2) team takes great pride in the impact we have within the borders of West Virginia since January of 2023. From energy savings to CO₂ reduction, the recommendations we develop for these businesses not only help these businesses improve their sustainability, but also their bottom line!

Look at the impact of the opportunities we have found! →

35 Energy Efficiency/P2 Assessments

89 Recommendations

With Annual Savings of...

\$957,893 in Energy Costs

7,345 MWh of Electricity

18,150 MMBtu of Natural Gas

5,933 Metric Ton CO₂ Equivalent

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P2 Website



Inquire about or services



Questions or Comments?