

What are EPDs (Environmental Product Declarations)?

Sustainable design is becoming increasingly important. But there is no one definition of what qualifies as sustainable. Therefore guidelines are constantly being established and modified to help understand claims and performance. The Federal Trade Commission has established guidelines and rules for sustainability and environmental claims as well as standard product claims. In addition, a new standard was created to identify environmental performance of products and services (ISO 14025). ISO 14025 identifies the rules and procedures for developing environmental declarations and claims or an ISO Type III. ISO Standard 14020 establishes the ground rules for labels and declarations. ISO Standard 14021 establishes the rules for self-declared environmental claims, also known as green claims or ISO Type II labels. ISO Standard 14024 established the rules for third party verified environmental-labels or ISO Type I.

	Self-Declared	Verified
Environmental Labels	14021 (Type II)	14024 (Type I)
Environmental Claims	14021 (Type II)	
Environmental Product Declaration		14025 (Type III)

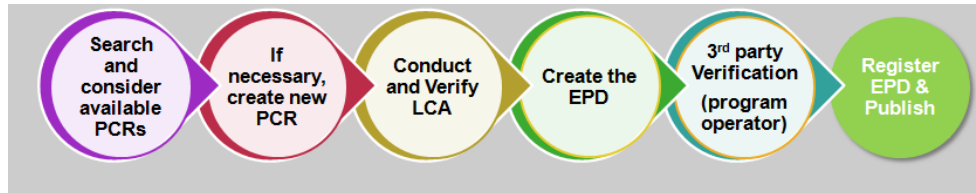
What Is In Them and How Are They Created?

An ISO Type III Environmental Product Declaration or EPD provide a complete picture of the environmental impact of the products you use. EPDs are the executive summary of a scientific study of all environmental impacts of a product or service across its life cycle, know as a [Life Cycle Assessment \(LCA\)](#) for that product or service. ISO 14040 defines the rules and guidelines for conducting a LCA. LCAs are the modeling of a product and service across every stage of that product's or service's life. There are assumptions made when creating these models, therefore rule on how the assumptions are chosen need to be created if the LCA is used to establish public disclosed claims or performance. These rules are called Product Category Rules (PCR) or Service Category Rules (SCR). These rules will vary from region to region as parts of the world will have different values and needs. For example, a PCR in Europe may be modified in North America with different assumptions or reporting criteria from your LCA. They should also be open to all related industry parties during their creation and modifications! If previous PCR for a product or service is available, it must be reviewed for local suitability.

ISO suggests the following impacts, shown on the left, should be reported by your LCA; but a local PCR, the list on the right is per the North American PCR for drywall, may eliminate some of these impacts, as shown.

	Global Warming		Global Warming
	Stratospheric Ozone Depletion		Stratospheric Ozone Depletion
	Ground Level Ozone		Ground Level Ozone
	Acidification		Acidification
	Eutrophication		Eutrophication
	Aquatic Toxicity		Aquatic Toxicity
	Human Health		Human Health
	Abiotic (Mineral) Depletion		Abiotic (Mineral) Depletion
	Abiotic (Land Use) Depletion		Abiotic (Land Use) Depletion
	Water Depletion		Water Depletion
	Wood Resources		Wood Resources
	Primary Energy		Primary Energy
	(Fossil Fuel Depletion)		(Fossil Fuel Depletion)

Once the PCR is created an LCA can be conducted. If an EPD is desired to make third-party verified claims, the following steps are undertaken:



How are they used?

For architects and designers, EPDs help maximize the sustainability of your design and enable you to create the best possible spaces. EPDs can also help you decrease your designs carbon footprint or other environmental impacts and building a more sustainable future for all.

As our world evolves, it's become increasingly important to design with the future in mind. Sustainable design has become more than just a trend; it's a staple in our society. For example, 9 out of 10 architects and designers have researched, sourced, or purchased a green product in 2013. 4 out of 10 architects and designers have indicated that 50% or more of their projects in 2013 involved specifying or purchasing green products.

So as an architect or designer we need to consider the environmental impact of the spaces we create. Do you actually know what's in the products you specify? How can you make a difference without a complete picture of each product's impacts? Well, this is where an environmental product declaration or EPD provides a detailed description of the environmental impact of selected products.

The EPD is much more comprehensive than any report we've used in the past. It covers everything from fossil fuel depletion to effects on human health (see discussion below), and there's already a growing list of industry organizations that recommend using the EPDs. So let's look behind an EPD and into the LCA.