

Environmental management system

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

In a nutshell, an Environmental Management System (EMS) is a tool used by an organisation to identify measure and manage the effects their activities can have on the environment.

What are the benefits?

Operational efficiencies

An EMS will help reduce your environmental impact, which also often have a direct cost saving e.g.

- Waste minimisation
- More efficient use of resources
- Energy reduction

Knowledge that you are doing your bit

To help protect the natural environment is the 'feel good' side of environmental management. This moral obligation is sometimes far greater than any business drivers.

Legal compliance

Undertaking an environmental review will identify your current status and provide a gap analysis on the actions you need to take to achieve legal compliance.

Reputation

Organisations are coming under increased scrutiny from a whole range of stakeholders to demonstrate that they understand environmental issues and obligations. Being able to confidently provide such evidence, in a transparent way, is paramount to improving reputation. Conversely, the negative impact an environmental incident can have on an organisation can be just as damaging. Protecting against such incidents occurring in the first place is an important tool for overall business risk management.

Reputation

Competitive Advantage: Having an EMS could help set you apart, whether that be by being the first amongst your competitors to realise the advantages or being able to use elements of the systems to demonstrate improved efficiencies. However, what is becoming more

apparent in these tough economic times, is that not having an EMS is more the exception than the norm.

Is the move right for you?

And who cares?

Your clients and customers – are increasingly concerned by your environmental decisions. Thanks to an environmental media explosion in recent years, they are no longer impressed by 'greenwash' and want to know that the claims you are making are backed up by genuine action.

Your employees – research has shown that employees want to work for an organisation that take their environmental obligations seriously. Being able to recognise and act upon wider responsibilities helps to portray the Company as being more mature and subsequently more appealing to prospective employees.

Your future – any business cares about being there for the long run. Sound vision, values and reputation all form part of this plan for longevity.

Understand the reasons?

What are the options?

There are two distinct routes that can be taken; either the implementation of an informal EMS or the adoption of a formal standard such as ISO 14001. What the right approach is for your Company depends a lot on what your drivers are....

For example, if you need to demonstrate the status of your EMS in a consistently recognisable way, such as during tender processes, ISO 14001 would be right for you. It is an international standard for an Environmental Management System which clearly and definitively identifies

the process and documents required in order to demonstrate a minimum level of environmental compliance. It enables you to demonstrate you have met this standard due to the requirement for independent verification by audit.

You may also be increasingly asked to provide Key Performance Indicators in relation to your environmental performance. By being armed with this information not only saves a lot of time but presents your Company to your stakeholders in a far more professional manner.

Whether you decide to progress along the formal or informal route, any EMS will require you to:

- Have an environmental policy
- Carry out an exercise to identify how your organisation interacts with the environment and what your legal obligations are
- Write a set of environmental procedures to standardise activities in a way that minimises impacts on the environment
- Endorse a set of objectives and targets in order to demonstrate continual improvement
- Ensure a process is in place to check such processes are being implemented throughout the Company.

The benefits of having an independently verified EMS are well documented, something that Construct are keen to promote to their members. In alliance with Exemplas (part of the University of Hertfordshire) funding has been secured for a consultant to assist a small number of Companies to improve their environmental credentials, whether you are at the start of your ISO14001 journey or you have an existing EMS that needs reviewing. If you would like to be part of this unique opportunity, [contact us](#).

For further information contact

Construct, Riverside House, 4 Meadows Business Park, Station Approach, Blackwater, Camberley, Surrey GU17 9AB
Tel: 01276 38444 Fax: 01276 38899 E-mail: enquiries@construct.org.uk www.construct.org.uk