

## Introduction

An Environmental Management System (EMS) serves the same purpose as management systems related to quality assurance or health and safety. It assesses an organisation's strengths and weaknesses and can identify and manage significant impacts. It will allow better resource management which will lead to cost savings. An EMS provides a framework which allows you to manage environmental issues – which are growing. It will demonstrate compliance with legislation and performance against recognised industry standards. An EMS would not just document internal procedures and administrative processes, but aim to continually improve environmental performance and compliance with legislation.

The information from the scheme should be communicated internally and externally and should ideally be instigated by the head of the organisation, so that it is as influential as possible. It will have a beneficial knock-on effect outside of the company as it manages the whole supply chain and so will directly influence your suppliers to improve their environmental performance.

## Why Implement an EMS

- Regulatory compliance – The system allows you to meet legal responsibilities and manage them in a methodical and daily basis.
- Resource efficiency – Policies and procedures are implemented to manage waste and resources helping bottom-line costs.
- Market positioning – Producing an EMS can enhance your reputation as it demonstrates to both customers and investors your commitment to reducing your organisation's environmental impact. This can increase sales and raise investment opportunities.
- Prevents loss of tendering – Large businesses and government departments may only deal with companies with an EMS. Organisations with an accredited certified EMS (see overleaf) are given greater recognition by the Environment Agency under Integrated Pollution Prevention Control (IPPC).

## Recognised EMS

DEFRA suggest that organisations embarking on an EMS recognize the value to their business of adopting a national or international standard:

- ISO 14001 - This is an international standard which will help you identify, evaluate, manage and improve the environmental impacts of your products and services.
- EMAS (Eco Management and Audit Scheme) – This is an EU initiative whereby organisations produce a public statement regarding their performance against targets and objectives and incorporates ISO 14001.
- BS8555 – This British Standard divides the EMS process of ISO14001 or EMAS into six separate stages which makes the practice of implementing easier, less daunting and manageable especially for smaller companies: <http://www.bsigroup.com/>.

## Accreditation/Certification

DEFRA also recommends that organisations should set a goal of attaining certification of their EMS that provides independent recognition of achievements by employing auditors accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS): <http://www.ukas.com/>.

## **The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)**

IEMA has developed the IEMA-Acorn scheme which enables companies to gain UKAS accreditation for their achievements at each stage of ISO14001 or EMAS. In this way your company can benefit from immediate recognition of your work in improving environmental performance. On completion of each your company will be registered on the public Acorn register: <http://www.iema.net/>.

## **STEMS**

BSI Management Systems also has a certification scheme accredited by UKAS for each stage of BS 8555 called Steps Towards Environmental Management Systems (STEMS), which would suit the SME: <http://tinyurl.com/5dy72e>.

## **Green Dragon Environmental Standard**

This accreditation scheme is operated by ARENA Network which is based in Wales but operates nationally. The scheme is similar to STEMS and is also UKAS accredited: <http://tinyurl.com/66wsgz>

## **EMAS Easy**

EMAS Easy is a tool designed by the European Commission specifically to help small and micro businesses obtain registration for EMAS, as a group of organisations, and enables them to implement an EMS in a very short timeframe: <http://tinyurl.com/6njmv5>.

## **Environmental Reporting**

This is the process of informing relevant organisations and/or the public about your company's environmental performance or effects. The International Network for Environmental Management website has tools and a checklist especially designed to help the smaller business complete an environmental report: <http://www.inem.org/>.

## **Further Assistance and Information**

This introduction to EMS has attempted to highlight that achieving certification can improve competitiveness and is not solely the domain of large organisations that have greater resources but is easily achievable for the SMEs that make up the majority of businesses in Cheltenham. There is plenty of assistance in Cheltenham and organisations who can offer expert support and answer specific questions on implementing an EMS:

Gloucestershire Resource Efficiency Club and specifically, the Environmental Business Support Programme, which is a partnership between the University of Gloucestershire, Parklife, Business Link, Envirowise and the Environment Agency. For further details contact Alex Steele at the University of Gloucestershire: <http://www.glos.ac.uk/>.

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Envirowise:

0800 584794, <http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/adviceline>