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Environmental Management Systems

Environmental Management Systems (EMS) provide a structured, practical framework within which environmental issues and impacts can be managed. They are used to provide an organisation's management with a structured framework for identifying, evaluating, managing and improving its environmental performance.

A core principle of any EMS is that of continual improvement, thereby leading to better environmental performance by the organisation on a sustained basis. Developing an EMS will take time and effort but it will bring about major improvements to your performance. More information about the nature of an EMS is at [what's in an EMS? \(http://eaclink.info/?HXMVS\)](http://eaclink.info/?HXMVS).

You can quite easily set up your own EMS as an informal internal management tool. Alternatively, there are recognised national and international standards against which your EMS can be externally assessed and certified. A new British Standard, BS 8555, was launched in 2004 to help organisations put in place a full EMS by taking a phased approach which breaks the implementation process down into five manageable stages. A sixth level allows organisations to develop their systems further, with the potential of seeking recognition against ISO 14001 or EMAS. ISO14001 specifies all the requirements necessary for a robust environmental management system. EMAS (EU Eco Management and Audit Scheme) is a voluntary EU wide scheme which gives recognition to organisations who have implemented ISO 14001 and produced a public statement about their performance.

The choice depends on what is right for your organisation and the resources you can put into it. There are many organizations that can help you decide what is best for you. See the further information section below.

Further information:

www.envirowise.gov.uk/ems

<http://www.iema.net/>

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/scp/actions/ems.htm>

Defra has produced a Position Statement which sets out the Government's policy on EMSs, explains why the Government encourages wider take up of EMSs, and outlines the main benefits of implementing an EMS and what role EMSs can play in stimulating organisations to adopt more sustainable practices as well as improve their environmental performance.

The Position Statement identifies the main elements that are required for a good EMS, addresses the role of EMSs in regulation, the role of independent certification and the value of accreditation as well as considering future challenges for EMSs. See

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/scp/pdf/ems.pdf>