

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# ENVIRONMENTAL **Management** Systems

**Your Business  
Advantage**

# ADVANTAGE: EMS



An Environmental Management System (EMS) is a set of processes and practices that enable an organization to reduce its environmental impacts and increase its operating efficiency. An EMS helps an organization systematically manage its environmental "footprint" — the environmental impact associated with its activities, products, and services. An EMS not only helps an organization pay attention to its regulatory responsibilities; it also provides a means for addressing non-regulated environmental aspects such as energy efficiency and resource conservation. EMSs come in a variety of forms, and can be used in a variety of settings — in factories, small businesses, service industries, and government agencies.

By reinforcing your existing operations with a comprehensive approach to environmental management, an EMS can help you streamline operations, create awareness that environmental protection is every employee's job, and improve environmental performance.

EMSs are also consistent with quality management principles. They build on organizational processes and features that have been put in place to help you meet business goals, such as: goal setting, work practices, employee training, records management, emergency preparedness, organizational structure, and continuous improvement.

So, unless you're in a start-up phase, you won't have to start an EMS from scratch. On the contrary, you may be further along than you think.

## Want to Know More?

Read on to find out about the many EMS advantages.

## Seize the Advantage

Today many organizations are finding that an EMS can be a powerful tool for improving efficiency and effectiveness. Properly implemented, an EMS allows you to integrate environmental responsibilities into your day to day operations. This can help you:

- + Improve Environmental Performance
- + Become More Competitive
- + Save Money
- + Boost Your Public Image
- + Retain Valuable Employees
- + Better Manage Environmental Legal Obligations

# PERFORMANCE

## Improve Environmental Performance

Some managers act on environmental management only when they reach the crisis stage. Their energy is consumed by reacting rather than preparing for the future. But proactive planning with an EMS means fewer surprises. It prevents problems from going unnoticed, and helps you get to the root causes that create them in the first place. By looking at all aspects of performance, you can find improvement opportunities that might otherwise go unnoticed.

## Make Your Organization More Competitive

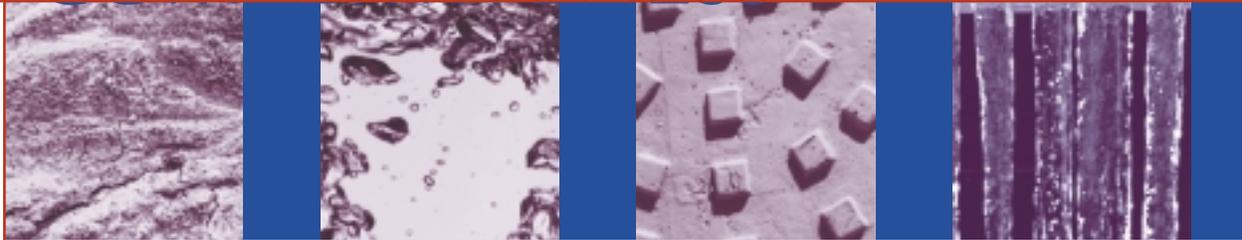
Whether it is reducing energy costs or eliminating unnecessary chemicals, a dollar saved through improved efficiency is a dollar earned. Those savings can be used to help you grow your business, boost shareholder earnings, or reward employees. At an even more basic level, an EMS can help you secure access to certain markets. Today, some industries, such as automobile manufacturing, are requiring suppliers to meet codes of environmental conduct or to be certified under the international EMS standard, ISO 14001.

The trend is clear — companies that get strategic about environmental performance are going to have a real advantage in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

“I am in business to make money. Having an EMS not only helps the environment, but directly corresponds to a better bottom line.”

— Small business owner,  
Andrew Jacobs,  
President, Ideal Jacobs  
Corporation

# COMPETITIVENESS



## Save Your Organization Money

By providing a more systematic approach to environmental management, an EMS can reveal many opportunities for improving efficiency. This can help you cut waste, prevent pollution, conserve resources, and save money. For example, your organization could benefit from improved operating practices as well as lower operating costs by switching to newer, cleaner technology. An EMS can show where upgrades and other environmental improvements best fit into your overall business strategy, and help you weigh the costs and benefits of changes so you can make well-informed decisions.

## Employing an EMS at Small Metal Finishing Companies

### The Southern California Experience

Water use and wastewater treatment costs were major issues for several Southern California metal finishing companies. Through the use of an EMS, these companies identified targets and initiatives for improvement. The results show how improving environmental performance can improve the bottom line:

Case 1: A 15 percent reduction in water use in 8 months, resulting in an estimated annual savings of \$15,000.

Case 2: A 16 percent reduction in water treatment chemical use in 5 months, resulting in an estimated annual savings of more than \$10,500.

Case 3: A 20 percent reduction in water use in 3 months, resulting in an estimated monthly savings of \$750 in water purchase and \$7,500 in water treatment.

# IMAGE

## Boost Your Public Image

Improving environmental performance can be just as important externally. Americans expect companies in their communities to operate in an environmentally sound manner. As more information is made available over the Internet, citizens can go online and find out about toxic emissions, compliance with environmental standards, and more. An EMS provides the structure to measure how well your environmental management program is working. By measuring progress against goals, and proactively reporting the results, you can help build public trust and credibility.

This type of transparency can affect investor decisions, too. Indeed, financial analysts are paying more attention to environmental management than ever before. And a new generation of socially responsible investment funds is designed with the environmentally-conscious investor in mind.

Improving performance can boost relations with yet another group — regulatory agencies. Today, many states are establishing special programs to recognize environmental leadership. Likewise, EPA has a leadership program of its own. The National Environmental Performance Track Program provides top environmental performers with public recognition, information resources, and opportunities for regulatory and administrative flexibility. Having an EMS is a prerequisite for Performance Track membership, if you would like to find out more about the program please visit the Web site at [www.epa.gov/performance-track](http://www.epa.gov/performance-track).

# IMPROVEMENT



## Help Retain and Recruit Employees

Environmental, health, and safety issues are often of great interest to employees. An EMS can boost performance in these areas, and in so doing, boost employee pride, morale, and overall job satisfaction. This can be useful in terms of retaining your current workers — and recruiting new ones.

## Better Manage Your Environmental Legal Obligations

An EMS provides the structure to ensure that you identify and meet all environmental legal requirements. In the short term, this helps you avoid violations and all the repercussions they can bring. Longer term, an EMS can help you make important decisions about the timing and size of investments needed to comply with future regulations.

# ADVANTAGE: RESULTS

## Where to Look for Help?

You may find help through a variety of sources, including community colleges, trade associations, and private consultants. Your state environmental agency and EPA also provide information through the Internet, seminars, and training programs — at little or no cost. EPA's Web site [www.epa.gov/ems](http://www.epa.gov/ems) acts as a gateway to many products and services related to EMS use and development.

## What Are You Waiting for?

Isn't it time you thought about an EMS for your organization? Keep in mind that you don't have to do everything at once. You just have to get started. An EMS will lead you to assess where you are, where you want to go, and what issues are most important for your operation.

To find out more about  
Environmental Management Systems,  
please visit our  
Web site at: [www.epa.gov/ems](http://www.epa.gov/ems)

## The Most Important Thing Is to Start!

An EMS makes good sense — for your business and the environment. Join the many organizations that have already seized the EMS advantage.



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