

Elevate Environmental Protection, Safety, and Compliance with an Environmental Management System





Manage Aspects and Impacts of Environmental Safety in Operations

Concern for the environment keeps growing across business, industry, government, and the general public. With that concern comes the expectation that organizations will be vigilant in doing their part to protect the environment. This includes not only complying with regulations but also striving to go above and beyond to demonstrate their commitment to being good stewards of our planet. Implementing an Environmental Management System (EMS) is an effective way for organizations to systematically infuse environmental safety practices into their operations.

MS processes and practices enable organizations to reduce their environmental impacts and increase their operating efficiency. Many organizations implement an EMS based on the ISO 14001 international standard in order to identify, manage, monitor, and control environmental aspects and impacts using global best practices.

Provide Guidance and Confidence

Achieving results through well-established methods is a primary goal of all management systems, and an Environmental Management System is no exception. Confidence stems from following established standards, such as ISO 14001 and applying evidence-based approaches. Verification is key. Once a system is verified as effective, such as through an audit, it can provide confidence to all interested parties.

Interested parties can include management, workers, regulatory bodies, auditors, customers, and any others with a stake in your organization's environmental practices and the effective operation of your management system. Transparency between your organization and these interested parties is key to generating confidence in your processes and systems.



Demonstrate Top Management Involvement and Sponsorship

Because “tone at the top” executive support is a critical enabler of any organizational initiative, effective management systems often include specific requirements for top management. For example, the EMS may specify that top management will:

- Periodically review all processes and expectations and then take action as needed

- Establish and regularly communicate policies and plans
- Support, encourage, and formally require internal communication

Setting a defined role for top management in the management system helps ensure ongoing discipline, transparency, and effectiveness.

The Five Steps in Environmental Management

The key elements of the ISO 14001 standard for Environmental Management Systems can be addressed in five steps:

- 1. Environmental Policy:** Establish an environmental policy that is tied to the organization’s mission.
- 2. Planning:** Identify regulatory requirements, processes, resources, and impacts. Develop goals for improvement efforts.
- 3. Implementation:** Define the structure and responsibilities. Develop and implement operational procedures. Create documentation and train staff.
- 4. Checking and Correcting:** Monitor and measure results using internal audits. Identify problems and develop corrective action plans.
- 5. Management Review:** Charge top management with reviewing the EMS and results of internal audits. Modify as needed to ensure compliance.



Control Environmental Aspects and Impacts

ISO 14001:2015 defines an environmental aspect as “an element of an organization’s activities, products or services that may impact, or does impact, the environment.” These aspects could be associated with core processes or supporting processes. The result of an environmental aspect is known as an environmental impact.

Impact control aims to minimize impacts and protect the environment. It involves a series of plans and protocols to manage and monitor the identified risks that might occur over the lifetime of a project or an organization, such as technological failures and natural disasters, along with procedures to mitigate these risks, which will also be monitored.

Impact control provides guidance in two key areas:

- How to do something: For example, documented instructions for performing a task as part of the management system.
- What to do: For example, a pilot’s pre-flight checklist. (The document describes the “what” but not the “how,” since the pilot already knows how.

An effective Environmental Management System will contain both of these elements, making it a useful tool to determine and control aspects and impacts.

Support the Triple Bottom Line: People, Planet, and Profit

As part of your organization’s management system or in your personal life, common practices can have positive environmental impacts that in turn provide health and economic benefits. For example, you can make it a practice to:

- Reduce energy consumption
- Conserve water
- Reduce packaging
- Recycle old technology
- Consider carbon footprint when travelling
- Reduce meat consumption
- Reuse and repurpose items
- Cultivate a garden

Everyone has a responsibility to be mindful of the environment. An Environmental Management System enables you to implement mindful behaviors in a systematic, scalable way that is set up to demonstrate your organization’s commitment, achieve regulatory compliance, and continually improve outcomes.

For more information, visit

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