

## Fact Sheet 03

# Environmental Management Systems

## An Introduction

### What is an Environmental Management System?

An Environmental Management System or EMS is similar to other management systems, such as those used to manage quality or health and safety, it:

- provides you with a framework to assess your business' strengths and weaknesses
- helps you identify and manage any significant environmental impacts
- can help you manage your resources more efficiently and therefore save you money
- helps you comply with environmental legislation
- provides benchmarks for environmental improvements
- improves the reliability and credibility of your environmental policy

One of the prime benefits of an EMS for many organisations is the ability to prove to customers that you are committed to meeting your environmental responsibilities. You can demonstrate this by getting your EMS certified to standards such as ISO 14001 or BS 8555.

### What is ISO 14001:2004?

The ISO 14001:2004 Environmental Management Systems (EMS) certification enables you to demonstrate your commitment to continual improvement. It is a management tool for assessing, monitoring and controlling the environmental impacts of a company or organisation. It is more thorough than ad-hoc approaches such as recycling paper, using low energy light bulbs and "switch off" campaigns, because it puts systems in place to ensure that the whole organisation is included in the assessment. A good system will incorporate environmental policies, recycling of materials, waste minimisation, energy saving programmes and management of environmental risk. The ISO 14001:2004 Standard document provides guidance on how to manage the environmental aspects of your business activities more effectively. Find out more at [www.iso.org/iso](http://www.iso.org/iso).



### What is BS8555?

BS 8555 is a British Standard which provides guidance on the phased implementation of an EMS, including the management of environmental performance evaluation, within a framework of six phases. These phases can be tackled incrementally at a pace that suits your organisation and implementation of all phases can lead to an EMS that is ready for assessment against the requirements of ISO 14001 and / or EMAS. The IEMA Acorn Scheme, an officially recognised EMS standard recommended by the government, offers accredited recognition for organisations implementing an EMS using the phased approach in BS8555. Find out more at [www.iema.net/ems/acorn\\_scheme](http://www.iema.net/ems/acorn_scheme).



---

## What is BS8555?

BS 8555 is a British Standard which provides guidance on the phased implementation of an EMS, including the management of environmental performance evaluation, within a framework of six phases. These phases can be tackled incrementally at a pace that suits your organisation and implementation of all phases can lead to an EMS that is ready for assessment against the requirements of ISO 14001 and / or EMAS. The IEMA Acorn Scheme [www.iema.net/ems/acorn\\_scheme](http://www.iema.net/ems/acorn_scheme), an officially recognised EMS standard recommended by the government, offers accredited recognition for organisations implementing an EMS using the phased approach in BS8555.

The six phases of BS 8555 are:

- Commitment and establishing the baseline of environmental impacts
- Identifying and ensuring compliance with legal and other requirements
- Developing environmental objectives, targets and programmes
- Implementation and operation of the EMS
- Checking, audit and review of the EMS
- EMS acknowledgement (getting ISO 14001 certification)

Each of the six phases of BS 8555 is broken down into manageable tasks; which is particularly useful for smaller businesses, since the phased approach can assist with resource and capacity management and the organisation gets formal recognition at each phase of implementation of the standard. BS8555 is a relatively new standard and is therefore still building a body of support, so may not be so easily recognised nor understood by customers, nonetheless it is a credible alternative to ISO14001.

## The benefits of a certified EMS

The international recognition of the EMS standard ISO 14001:2004 is a real boost to any company's reputation. What's more, any EMS can assist you in ensuring compliance with environmental legislation. Demonstrating a real commitment to the environment can transform your corporate culture externally by opening up new business opportunities with environmentally aware customers or clients, while internally it can improve employee ethics and the workplace. Compliance with ISO 14001:2004 can also provide your company with a better use of energy and resources, and reduce costs over time. ISO14001 also encourages environmental responsibility through the supply chain, where supplier assessments are implemented as part of risk assessment.

---

## What does certified mean?

You can implement all of the elements of an EMS yourself and some companies never go for certification, but certification by an accredited body will give your EMS extra distinction and carry more weight with your customers. Certification is undertaken through an external audit, but only when all of your EMS documentation is in place and the system has been proved to be fully implemented and working in the organisation. Certification should be carried out by UKAS-accredited bodies such as British Standards Institute (BSI), ISOQAR, SGS amongst many other bodies; check the UKAS website for a full list visit [www.ukas.com](http://www.ukas.com). This will ensure that your ISO 14001:2004 EMS demonstrates high levels of environmental compliance when bidding for contracts or expanding locally to accommodate new business. Many certification bodies offer a package that will include a Stage 1 audit (to check if you are ISO14001-ready), an actual certification audit (Stage 2) and three surveillance visits (annual audits). When you are awarded ISO14001, the certification is valid for three years and then you will have to go for full certification again. Your external certification and auditing costs over the three years are likely to be in the region of £2500 - £5000.

## Resources for implementation

The time required to implement ISO14001 depends on many factors:

- degree of top management commitment
- availability of resources (mainly people and time freed up from other tasks)
- whether or not there is a serious, hard-and-fast deadline
- organization size, type, configuration
- compliance status when you start
- extent to which the organization is 'system oriented' and already has some level of defined, documented processes (e.g. through ISO9001) that can be grandfathered into the ISO system
- number and magnitude of environmental interactions / impacts.

Six months is a bare minimum to implement a rudimentary system from start to finish. The larger the organization, and the more complex the process stream(s), the longer it tends to take. The average tends to be around 14 months from start to finish. Firms attempting the task without expert help tend to take much longer. Cost implications are dependent on how much time the company can devote to the project, but typically a small, office-based business, with low environmental risks, would spend in the region of £4000 to £6000 in the first year on consultancy help.

---

## Implementation of ISO14001:2004

Regular assessment helps you to continually use, monitor and improve your environmental management systems and the related processes. This improves the reliability of your internal operations to meet customer requirements, as well as overall performance. ISO14001 covers all activities – it can be site specific or for the whole company, that is down to personal choice. The key steps for implementing ISO14001 are:

- Plan system, taking into account a) business objectives; b) business structure; c) requirements of the relevant Standard(s); d) identified compliance gaps
- Carry out environmental review
- Identify significant environmental aspects and impacts
- Identify and record applicable environmental legislation
- Define policy statement, ensuring that it is a) unique to your business, b) written in your language, and c) user-friendly
- Draft action plan for implementation of policy
- Define and document operational processes and their interaction
- Document processes required for ISO14001
- Identify or establish key system performance measures
- Identify baseline and commence data gathering and analysis
- Establish document control and distribution system
- Orient / train work force in a) aspects of the system that everyone has to know and b) aspects of the system specific to their jobs
- Internally audit system to confirm that it is understood, implemented, and compliant
- Hold initial management review
- Select certification body and arrange pre-certification audit.

## Questions to ask yourself before going for a certified EMS i.e. ISO14001 or BS8555

- Decide if you really need a certified system; are your customers asking for it, are your competitors certified, do you have substantial environmental impacts?
- If the answer to all of these questions is 'no', then it may not be the most beneficial use of resources. In some sectors however; e.g. cleaning, printing, construction, customers are demanding certification.
- Do you have the internal resources to support the implementation?
- Whilst a consultant can help you formulate the documentation, gain certification and manage your system, ultimately, it's your system and you have to take ownership of it to get the most out of it.
- Are you really committed to continual improvement?
- Once you implement any management system you are committed to continual improvement and whilst these may only be small objectives and targets, you have to keep moving forward.
- Are you thinking of implementing another management system like ISO9001 (Quality) or OHSAS (18001)?

- Both of these are compatible with ISO14001 and many of the documents required are the same, so if you already have one of these systems in place, or are thinking about implementing one, then you will get economies of scale in implementation and auditing and certification from combining them or doing them at the same time.

### Where can I find further information?

Type of information	Link	What you'll find
IEMA Acorn Scheme	<a href="http://www.iema.net/ems/acorn_scheme">www.iema.net/ems/acorn_scheme</a>	Guidance
ISO	<a href="http://www.iso.org/iso">www.iso.org/iso</a>	Guidance
UKAS	<a href="http://www.ukas.com">www.ukas.com</a>	Guidance

### Disclaimer:

Every effort is made to ensure that the information given herein is accurate, but no responsibility is accepted for any errors, omissions or misleading statements.

### Factsheets available on our website – log on to [www.insw1.com/greenbusiness](http://www.insw1.com/greenbusiness) for more information.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 01 The CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme          | 05 Green Marketing                           |
| 02 Energy Management for Facilities Managers | 06 Introduction to Environmental Legislation |
| 03 Environmental Management Systems          | 07 Waste Recycling                           |
| 04 Green Procurement                         | 08 Resource Efficiency                       |