

Environmental Management Systems (EMS)



Fact Sheet

An EMS is a voluntary management system for identifying, controlling and monitoring a facility's activities, which have potential environmental impacts. The framework provides structure and consistency for overseeing daily activities that shifts the environmental focus from reactive to proactive. Voluntary implementation of EMSs has increased throughout the world as industry and organizations realize their environmental and market place value.

What is an EMS?

An EMS is a system that addresses potential environmental impacts and provides an organized approach to management decisions based on business needs, resources, and facility-specific goals. The idea is to integrate responsibilities and practices into an overall management system to increase efficiency and reduce environmental impacts.

There is no one type of EMS, but there are standards or formats to follow which provide a single flexible framework that help create a "level playing field" in the world market. The most well known and widely used EMS standard is the ISO 14001 standard. Worldwide representatives from industry, government, nongovernmental organizations, and other interested parties finalized the ISO 14001 EMS standard in 1996 and updated it in 2004. The intent of the standard was to produce a single framework that could be accommodated to varied applications all over the world. A facility's cross-functional team designs specific elements of the EMS tailored to its own individual needs.

These elements typically include:

- Compliance and EMS auditing procedures;
- Operational controls through written work instructions;
- Employee environmental training plans;
- Emergency response plans and testing schedule;
- Legal requirements;
- Recordkeeping and document control; and
- Communication procedures.

In short, the EMS provides an ongoing process specifically tailored to improve business practices and enhance environmental performance.



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EMS Benefits –

- *Reduced costs* – Improved operating efficiency; improved environmental compliance; reduced monitoring costs; reduced energy and waste disposal costs; increased employee productivity
- *Market advantages* – Expanding the “Green” image, an EMS is being required in some markets and strongly recommended in others
- *Improved credibility* – Recognition by local communities, environmental regulators, employees, and environmental groups
- *Enhanced regulatory compliance* – Adds consistency and stability to improve control over environmental issues; helps anticipate and control upsets
- *Improved environmental performance* Systematic identification and on-going corrections through self and/or third party audits keep the EMS current; helps measure social, economic, and environmental benefits of operations and controls

The Office of Environmental Assistance of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality has published a brochure entitled, *A Step-by-Step Guide* along with a workbook-style manual to assist in the development of a facility-specific EMS. The manual is based on the international standard, ISO14001, and has sections that reference the Clean Corporate Citizen program. This “plain English” manual can take an organization step-by-step through the process of developing and implementing an EMS.

- OEA-C3 and OEA-EMS web sites at www.michigan.gov/deq, go to **Key Topics** and click on Environmental Incentives.

How does the EMS relate to Michigan’s Clean Corporate Citizen (C3) Program?

Development of an EMS in Michigan is a big step toward designation as a C3. To participate, a facility needs:

- (1) a history of environmental compliance,
- (2) an EMS, and
- (3) participation in pollution prevention (P2) activities.

Over and above the benefits derived from the EMS, when a facility is designated as a C3 it automatically qualifies for certain regulatory benefits in air, surface water, groundwater and storage tank programs. In addition, there is public recognition from the Governor and the DEQ Director. Many C3s host an event for their employees, local politicians, corporate management, and community members to celebrate their C3 achievement.

Other Sources of EMS Information:

- American National Standards Institute (ANSI)
212-642-4900
www.ansi.org
- ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board
800-606-5394
www.anab.org
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
202-566-2959
www.epa.gov/ems

An EMS is not a substitute for regulatory compliance, with regulations, but can improve a company's overall compliance performance.