

## **EMS Support in the Federal Government**

Managing the environmental and health and safety considerations of the federal government is a critical component of our commitment to being good stewards of our nation's natural resources. But this is a great task, requiring considerable human and financial resources. The more efficiently we manage environment, health and safety issues, the better stewards we can be of these valuable resources. Sound management practices are the keys to success, and lead to better government.

The private sector experience in applying management system principles to environmental issues has shown that this organized approach is both prudent and effective. Just as we feel that there should not be two sets of rules- one for government and one for the people, we also feel that there should not be barriers to applying opportunities proven in the private sector to federal government. With this in mind, this Administration advocates the implementation of environmental management systems (EMS) in the federal government.

**What is an EMS?** An EMS is a globally embraced business management practice that allows an organization to strategically address its environmental, health and safety matters. EMS implementation reflects accepted quality management principles based on the "Plan, Do, Check, Act," model using a standard process to identify goals, implement them, determine progress, and make improvements to ensure continual improvement.

In an EMS, this effort focuses on;

- planning activities by identifying environmental impacts and related legal and other requirements; and developing objectives and targets to control and improve performance related to environmental issues,
- carrying out activities and operations, including training and documentation, to achieve the objectives and maintain control over environmental issues,
- monitoring and measuring the status of environmental parameters, status of objectives and targets, compliance status, and the health of the EMS itself, and providing procedures for corrective action in cases where data indicate non-conformance, and
- reporting performance information to senior management for action, including enhancing the EMS towards the goal of continual improvement.

**Why should we support EMS in the Federal Government?** EMSs enhance budgetary planning and overall performance by integrating management of environmental issues into organization management through a formal process of planning, performance measurement, and review. EMSs help federal organizations and facilities identify and reduce risk, achieve compliance with regulation, and respond to Administration environmental performance goals. It is prudent then for the federal government to adopt the concept of the EMS model to manage its environmental affairs. Because of its size, geographic distribution, and range of activities, the federal government significantly interacts with the environment. In addition, the government expends a large amount of resources, both human and financial, on managing its environmental affairs.

A well-implemented EMS not only improves regulatory compliance and environmental

performance, it increases overall efficiency and accountability, reduces operational costs and potential liability, and enhances employee morale and community relations. Developing and implementing an EMS has limited short-term costs, including an investment of internal resources, training of personnel, and possibly hiring a consultant to analyze environmental conditions and suggest improvements.

**Background:** EMSs are utilized extensively in the private sector around the world, by such companies as DuPont, IBM, Johnson & Johnson, and Pfizer. While most private sector organizations follow the International Organization for Standardization's EMS guidelines (the ISO 14000 series), others adopt similar principles but different terminology and format. The federal sector began implementation of EMSs in the late 1990s and in response to requirements of Executive Order 13148, "Greening the Government Through Leadership in Environmental Management," over 180 federal facilities now have an operational EMS with 18 facilities formally registered to the ISO 14001 standard. Based on the number of federal facilities affected by environmental regulation and the December, 2005 deadline imposed by the Order, the number of facilities with an EMS should rise to between seven and ten thousand over the next several years.

**What is the federal government's role?** On April 1, 2002, CEQ Chairman Jim Connaughton and OMB Director Mitch Daniels wrote to all agency heads that "[t]he federal government must be a leader in using this tool of effective management" and urged each "to actively participate in your agency's efforts to make EMS a priority at all levels of your agency." In 2002, OMB revised its A-11 budget guidance to include EMSs. To date, a significant number of federal facilities have EMSs in place – with many more developing agency policies, training, and EMS implementation tools. EPA, DoD, and others are developing resources that other agencies can use to implement EMSs. Leading organizations also include health and safety in their EMSs. These important issues are recommended for inclusion in federal EMSs because of their integral nature and synergistic impacts on the environment, workplace, community, and employees.

At present, government environmental personnel are aware of the requirement to implement an EMS. To support and reinforce this effort, it is vital that government management, policy and budget personnel are engaged in the EMS process. Both in concept and practice, the EMS approach meshes well with the Administration's management objectives. It provides the platform for meeting Administration stewardship goals as well as the management tools to measure and improve performance against those goals.

The Administration is actively promoting and supporting the implementation of EMS, and we are already hearing of many excellent experiences by agencies that are using an EMS.

More information on EMS is available at the EPA web site, [www.epa.gov/ems](http://www.epa.gov/ems) and the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive web site, [www.ofee.gov/ems/ems.htm](http://www.ofee.gov/ems/ems.htm). Additional or more specific information may be obtained by contacting Ed Pinero, Deputy Federal Environmental Executive, at [ed.pinero@ofee.gov](mailto:ed.pinero@ofee.gov).