

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, EXECUTIVE ORDERS, METRICS, AND REPORT CARDS

An environmental management system (EMS) is a tool that can accomplish or facilitate the implementation of many requirements and expectations facing federal agencies. An EMS is a process and framework used by an organization to manage its environmental affairs and issues, most notably those areas where the entity interacts with or affects the environment, as well as where legal requirements exist. The key to success is understanding the relationships and linkages among the various issues and requirements, and being cognizant of how they all fit into the EMS framework. The type of EMS currently being implemented by most agencies is generally modeled using the *Plan, Do, Check, Act* management concept.

In this model, an organization's EMS will:

! **PLAN:** Plan its activities based on its environmental impacts and legal and other requirements; (including establishing objectives and targets based on that information). The specific requirements contained in Executive Orders (EO), along with other agency requirements and regulations represent the legal and other requirements that the organization will identify, plan for, carry out, measure, and act upon in the EMS. For example, developing the required agency plans and timetables under EO 13101.

! **DO:** Carry out these activities under planned conditions (including procedures and training). This part of the EMS addresses the day to day activities and operations that will lead to successfully meeting the objectives previously defined and managing environmental considerations, such as implementing specific agency and service plans (EO13101).

! **CHECK:** Monitor and measure the key parameters that relate to the planned activities and objectives. The actual parameters or metrics chosen are a function of the PLAN and DO elements. Collected information is used to make decisions such as corrective action and finding opportunities for improvement. Collected information is then compiled into reports to be used in internal and external communications, as well as for management reviews and strategic planning. For example, Report Card, Annual Report, or agency purchasing metrics required by various Executive Orders are collected and compiled, as part of this phase.

! **ACT:** Respond to the information generated by the EMS, including information on environmental performance, by making organizational and management decisions and adjustments. The organization will review the information and make decisions on necessary changes and enhancements to the EMS, including changes to operations and objectives, to address deficiencies and moving towards the commitment to continual improvement. Agency response to feedback from senior management on Annual Report and Report Card results are incorporated in this phase.

Therefore, an EMS can help an agency benefit in at least three broad ways by:

1. Facilitating integrated planning and operations for meeting, measuring, and reporting on the requirements in Executive Orders, Administration policies, agency orders and directives, and other requirements.
2. Providing sound management information to allow for focused and relevant environmental planning and budgeting, including discussion with OMB.
3. Providing a process tool to facilitate environmental performance improvement and compliance with environmental regulations.

Rather than being simply another requirement, an EMS is actually a comprehensive tool that can help bring together and address many other environmental management needs.

More information on EMS is available at the EPA web site, www.epa.gov/ems and the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive web site, www.ofee.gov/ems/ems.htm.