



Implementing ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems at the Municipal Level

Nine municipal organizations have been participating for the last 19 months in an EPA-sponsored pilot project designed to assist small to medium-sized public-sector agencies in developing and implementing an ISO 14001 Environmental Management System (EMS).

Each participating municipality has selected a facility/organization (a "fenceline") in their community to implement the EMS.

City/County	Fenceline
Town of Londonderry, New Hampshire	Public Works
City of Lowell, Massachusetts	Wastewater Treatment Facility
Wayne County, Michigan	Wastewater Treatment Facility
City of Indianapolis, Indiana	Public Works
Massachusetts Department of Corrections	Corrections Facility
City of Gaithersburg, Maryland	Public Works
Lansing Board of Water & Light, Michigan	Electric Generating Facility
City of Scottsdale, Arizona	Municipal Government
New York City, New York	Transit Authority

The Municipalities Initiative represents a unique opportunity for small and medium-sized government organizations to test the benefits of an ISO 14001 EMS. To date, benefits reported by participants have included better operational controls, improved communication, improved productivity, and better environmental problem-solving skills across a wider segment of the organization. Some other environmental benefits mentioned by participants were the reduction of quantities of solid waste being disposed of due to a process change, and a decrease in the cost of disposal due to a technologically-induced reduction in the quantities of solids at a sewage treatment facility.

"The use of voluntary environmental management systems (EMS) by organizations is rapidly increasing around the world."

Jim Horne, EPA Office of Wastewater Management

"Hopefully this pilot project will demonstrate that the EMS approach for managing environmental activities is not only applicable and useful to private sector entities but also for local government operations."

John Dombrowski, EPA Office of Compliance

EPA selected the Global Environment and Technology Foundation (GETF) to lead the Municipalities Initiative and to provide on-going training and technical assistance. Participants are using GETF's Implementation Toolkit of print and electronic training materials to accomplish the milestone in each phase of the project.

Participants have attended four in-depth workshops and have received training, materials and technical assistance through four intensive implementation phases within the two-year project. In Phase I, they developed an environmental policy, conducted a thorough search of the environmental issues associated with their projects, activities and services, identified their significant environmental aspects and impacts, and developed procedures for determining their legal requirements and keeping the information current and available where necessary. In Phase II, they established environmental objectives and targets, developed and implemented management programs to achieve their objectives, clearly defined and communicated employees' environmental roles and responsibilities. In Phase III, they developed environmental management programs (EMPs) for accomplishing their objectives and monitored performance indicators to track progress toward achieving their environmental goals. They strengthened employee awareness and competency, and intensified operational control throughout their facilities, particularly in areas which potentially have the most environmental impact. Participants are now completing Phase IV, the Checking and Corrective Action and Management Review requirements of ISO 14001 standard.

Participants keep connected between workshops via frequent e-mail contact, sharing documents on their intranet site and participating in conference calls. Additionally, GETF provides on-site technical assistance and guidance. Monthly progress reports track process decisions, benefits and hurdles, costs, and staff commitment.

Municipal Project Managers attribute compelling environmental benefits as a result of their EMS activities:

"Because of our EMS we have increased our contact with our citizens and involved them more in determining our environmental priorities through surveys. More frequent communication has helped us understand their environmental issues, concerns and priorities. And we have factored these into our environmental objectives and targets."

"Yes, an EMS is a voluntary system, but it provides us greater incentive and stronger management tools to meet our regulatory and compliance responsibilities. Our objectives and targets for next year focus on strong management programs, increased employee awareness and competence, and consistent operational control in our compliance areas. All of our employees facility-wide are participating in this program-not just those in the environmental areas. The EMS tools give us a better understanding of what we are required to do and the means to do it consistently, competently and efficiently. Plus, we have self-imposed additional requirements to help maintain our environment and prevent pollution, tackling programs we've never considered before- like odor management, energy reduction, contractor management, and environmental education for our citizens."

"In a relatively short period of time, we have learned and implemented efficient management tools for defining our environmental priorities and responsibilities. We have developed performance partnerships with our city organizations. We can better prioritize and defend our resource needs. We have raised stakeholder issues, political issues and technical issues. We have considered financial implications, legal implications and business realities. As a result we have established a much fuller definition of what environmental protection means in our city. Individually we have grown in our positions over the last 18 months and can handle our responsibilities with better confidence and competency."

"With regard to environmental compliance we have better understanding of our legal requirements. We have identified areas where we can really mess up and where we need strong operational control. We have identified and trained employees whose competence in their work area is critical to the environment. We have discovered several state and federal EPA offices that can (and have) provided us technical assistance in our sector. We are now beginning to measure the effect of the EMS on our compliance. And we expect that our EMS efforts will increase our ability to stay in compliance."

"The EMS has provided us a consistent method for finding the root causes of our noncompliances. We are no longer applying reactive quick fixes for violations, but are seeking to eliminate the causes of these violations and prevent future occurrences. Training, communication, monitoring, and measuring, and regular management review are the EMS tools we use every day that make this possible."

"There are many people aware and involved in environmental protection and stewardship than ever before. There's a sharing of responsibility because a link has been formed between the environmental department and other departments. There's a better recognition and fuller understanding of the appeal to voters of being green and reducing environmental liability and the costs associated with it. Management cares about these issues, and the EMS has established communication lines which help keep them current and informed."

"We know much more about our environmental issues than we did 18 months ago. Consequently we are more articulate in our conversations with other departments, other bureaucratic systems, with the state, with our own regulators, and with our neighbors."

GETF will submit a final report on the Municipalities Project to EPA. The report will include a brief description of each municipality, the organization to which they applied the EMS, and some of the drivers that led them in the project. It will describe benefits, hurdles, keys to success and lessons learned, costs, resource commitments and provide contact information for those who would like additional information. EPA will make the report available at the close of 1999 in hard copy and electronically.



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