

ENVIRONET NEWS

The electronic newsletter for improved environmental performance

In this issue:

- **ISO 14001 update**
- **WEEE Directive**
- **Ozone Depeleters**
- **Health & Safety Management**
- **Contaminated Land & the BUDGET**
- **Infestation or Knot - Japanese Knotweed**

If we are thinking about developing an EMS, where should we start?

The standard identifies an “Initial Review” as the starting point. Environet have carried out a number of concise reviews covering:

- Policies, procedures
- Resources, financial, human etc.
- Significant environmental effects
- Legal non-compliance
- Recommendations

Is it not just another bureaucratic exercise giving little

ISO 14001 Update

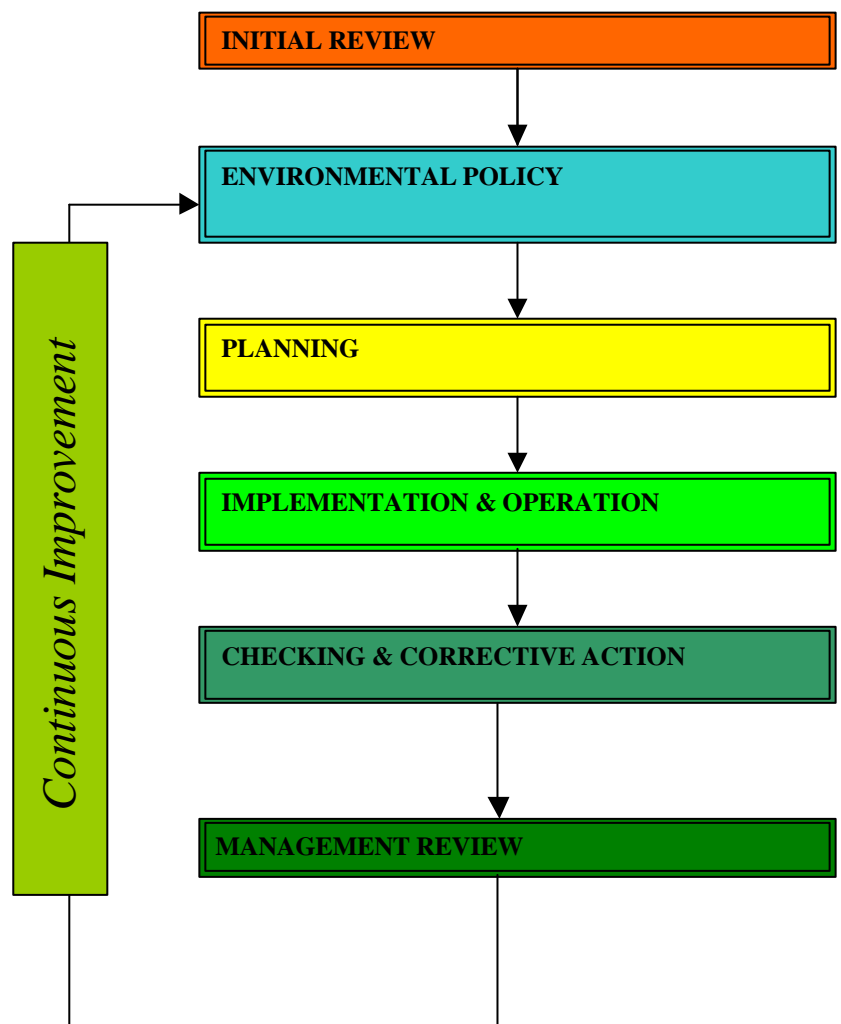
Environet has helped numerous organisations from a range of different sectors develop environmental management systems to the internationally recognised ISO 14001 standard.

How does an organisation benefit from an EMS ?

An EMS provides a structured approach that enables the organisation to make “continuous improvements” over time on those activities that have significant environmental effects. Most companies produce unnecessary quantities of waste, which not only costs on disposal, but also on raw material purchase. Savings that equate to an increase of 4% in profit margins are not uncommon.

Risk of incidents causing harm i.e. water pollution, non-compliance with legislative requirements etc. are minimised.

Increasingly supply chain pressure is being exerted, although not currently to the extent experienced with ISO 9000.



benefit?

An EMS is clearly not suited to all organisations. But to most, the answer is emphatically NO. If the EMS is designed to suit the organisation's structure, aspirations and activities, it will bring real benefits.

If you would like to discuss, without obligation, how an EMS would benefit your organisation please contact us.

Proposed EC Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment - The "WEEE" Directive

The European Commission's proposals follow a number of year's work to identify ways of reducing the impact of waste electrical and electronic equipment on the environment. The directive would be in line with the "Producer Responsibility" theme that would put greatest pressure on the manufacturers of electrical and electronic equipment to produce products that are recyclable, re-usable and recoverable.

A European Commission Project Group was established in 1994 to devise a strategy for reducing the impact of these products on the environment at end of life.

There are a number of reasons for focusing on this waste stream:

- This is a growing and dynamic sector, and the quantity of waste electrical and electronic equipment is expected to increase significantly in the future.
- There is the potential to increase reuse, recovery and recycling rates
- Some electrical and electronic equipment contains hazardous materials

The European Commission's proposal for an EC Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment was adopted on 13 June 2000. It is expected that the European Parliament will produce its first reading by the end of this year. It is expected to become law in 2002.

The objectives of the proposed WEEE Directive are:

- The prevention of waste electrical and electronic equipment;
- To increase re-use, recycling and other forms of recovery thereby contributing to a higher level of environmental protection and encouraging resource efficiency;
- To improve the environmental performance of all operators involved in the life cycle of electrical and electronic equipment, particularly those involved in the treatment of WEEE.

The proposal covers a wide range of electrical and electronic equipment including large household appliances, small household appliances, IT and telecommunication equipment, electrical and electronic tools, toys, medical equipment systems, monitoring and control instruments and automatic dispensers.

The Directive is likely to have a profound effect on manufacturers of electronic and electrical equipment. As a result, many companies within this sector are already preparing themselves by developing environmental management systems to ISO 14001.

Ozone Depleters - new EC Legislation!

New legislation has been passed tightening the controls on supply, use and disposal of ozone depleting substances, such as CFCs, HCFCs, halons and others.

New EC Regulation 2037/2000 became applicable in UK law in October 2000. It has far-reaching implications on all those involved in the supply, use and disposal of such substances and equipment that relies on these substances for their operation.

Any organisation with air conditioning or refrigeration equipment using CFCs or HCFCs should take heed of the new controls as they will almost certainly affect them. Similarly, any organisation considering purchasing new air conditioning or refrigeration equipment should ensure that the system does not run on HCFCs, due to future availability problems caused by the ban on use of virgin HCFC from 2010 and the ban on use of recycled HCFCs from 2015.

Health & Safety "Shake Up"

The present Government decided, some time ago to carry out a full review of H&S. This has been shelved until after the election. However, with the Conservatives looking unlikely to win there is every expectation that the review will be completed in the relatively near future. This review is significant, and so likely to impact all senior managers. Health & Safety expert Steve Rabson explains:

The review is likely to be the biggest shake-up since the introduction of the Health & Safety at Work Act in 1974. In particular the Government have set targets for a 30% reduction in working days lost through injury and ill-health. They also require a 10% drop in fatal and serious accidents along with a 20% reduction in work-related ill-health. The Government will expect half of this improvement to be made by 2004 and the other half by 2010.

The Government is planning that these targets will be achieved through motivation. However, it has also said that it is prepared to use the 'stick' as well as 'carrot' approach. This includes the raising of penalties for H&S breaches. In particular they are expected to provide the courts with the power of imprisonment for most H&S offences.



In particular the Government are seeking the introduction of a specific offence of corporate killing. In addition to prison sentences, there is an expectation that we will see the use of unlimited fines and the disqualification of company directors.

We are likely to hear far more about this initiative in the coming months and hope to keep you informed through future articles.

We have carried out reviews of health & safety management for a number of organisations and developed Health & Safety Management Systems to suit.

Budget Announcement - Tax Relief for Contaminated Land Clean up

The Chancellor announced in the recent Budget some potentially significant changes to the tax rules that apply during the remediation of contaminated sites. The aim of the proposed changes is to encourage remediation and beneficial re-use of contaminated sites. Contaminated land expert David Craze explains:

A new 150% accelerated payable tax credit to cover the costs of cleaning up contaminated land to help tackle the blight of the past is to be introduced. The main features of the proposed scheme are that it would:

- apply to land acquired as either trading stock, or as a fixed capital asset of a trade or Schedule A letting business;
- apply nationwide, i.e. England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland;
- cover only remediation and connected expenditure that is additional to normal site preparation costs;
- provide an enhanced deduction of 150% for all companies;
- allow the normal loss and group relief provisions to apply in respect of any loss created as a result of the enhanced deduction; and
- enable companies to surrender a qualifying remediation loss to the Exchequer in exchange for a payment calculated by reference to that loss.

The scheme will apply to costs incurred from the date of Royal Assent and will be reviewed after five years of operation.

Landfill Tax

The standard rate of Landfill Tax will be increased from £11 to £12 per tonne from 1 April 2001 as part of a five year programme of increases to encourage recycling and waste minimisation. An additional impact is the likely increase in on-site remediation solutions to contamination problems, e.g. bioremediation, solidification, encapsulation, etc. The rate is expected to rise by £1 per year for the next three years.

INFESTATION OR KNOT? – WEED OUT YOUR LIABILITIES

Contaminated land liabilities have been discussed in previous publications, what you may not be aware of is the potentially huge liability of attempting to develop a site contaminated with Japanese Knotweed. It may sound like the Day of the Triffids, but this is a serious issue.

Japanese Knotweed is an extremely invasive plant, it causes structural damage to roads, drains, paths and buildings. It spreads rapidly via a root system extending at least 2m deep and 7m horizontally from the plant. The smallest fragment of root, weighing less than a gram, can grow into another plant. As a result thousands of clusters are found throughout England, Wales & Scotland, in increasing numbers.

It is very difficult to eradicate the plant – repeat herbicidal treatment may take up to 6 years, a period most property developers would not contemplate. Herbicidal treatment may also be difficult if located adjacent to a water-course due to the pollution risks and liabilities under Water Resources Act 1991.



To cap it all, the plant and associated infested soil is considered as a “controlled waste”, so exported material from site needs to go to a licensed landfill site. Disposal costs are likely to be up to twice normal landfill costs @ £60/m³. In addition, extreme care needs to be taken to ensure that infected soil is not allowed to fall off vehicles as this spreads the plant along the highway, an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Neighbour relations can be severely strained as Knotweed does not respect property boundaries.

An Eradication / Control Strategy was recently developed

by Environet on a development site in Cardiff. 3,200m² of the site was covered with Japanese Knotweed. Cost analysis on the “dig and dump” option, including import of clean material, was estimated at £500k. The alternative herbicidal treatment option was estimated to be in the region of £10-20k, taking several years for complete elimination.

The herbicidal treatment option has now been in place for one growing season and the results appear extremely encouraging.

A purpose designed root barrier was installed to a depth of 2m to prevent re-infestation from the adjacent site.

Fortunately, the client acquired the site with the intention of refurbishing the existing building, with limited external works requiring excavation. No soil was exported from site and extreme care was taken to ensure that clean parts of the site were not infested.

If the intention had been to redevelop the site, it would have been a different story. The client would have had to either bear the additional costs of £½ million in the ground, or wait several years before he could realise the full potential of the site.

As it happened, Japanese Knotweed was identified by Environet prior to acquisition during a Phase 1 Land Contamination Assessment and the liabilities were therefore well understood prior to acquisition.

This newsletter is for guidance only and professional advice should be obtained before acting on any information contained herein. Environet Consulting Limited cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned to any person as a result of action taken or refrained from in consequence of the contents of this publication.



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