



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

August 2004
EPA530-F-03-039
www.epa.gov/osw

Making Permitting More Efficient and Effective Through the Use of Environmental Management Systems

What is an EMS?

An EMS is a continual cycle of planning, implementing, reviewing and improving the processes and actions that an organization undertakes to meet its business and environmental goals. EMSs are purely voluntary and do not replace the need for regulatory and enforcement programs, they simply create an environment in which regulators and regulations can work more efficiently and effectively. The major components of an EMS are: 1) Policy, 2) Planning, 3) Implementation and Operation, 4) Checking and Corrective Action, 5) Management Review.

Why are we promoting the use of EMSs?

EPA believes that using EMSs can improve environmental performance, and we are actively promoting EMSs in a variety of programs and forums including the Agency's Innovation Strategy, the Performance Track Program and through compliance assistance. In these contexts, EPA is increasingly confronted with questions of whether EMSs can be used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of regulatory tools (such as rules and permits) and what roles, if any, regulatory tools should play in promoting EMSs. EMSs have also been identified as one of the key strategies to provide further direction to the Resource Conservation Challenge.

OSW wants to facilitate and encourage the widespread adoption of successful, high quality EMSs at RCRA facilities, and ensure that, at a minimum, the RCRA permitting program is constructed in a way that allows for and facilitates EMS implementation, with continuous emphasis on pollution prevention, improved environmental performance and compliance. To accomplish this, OSW is working with the Regions and States to use EMSs as a tool in voluntary programs and to pilot changes in the permitting program that allow EMS-based changes to be made under the issued permit through dissemination of EMS information and the development of appropriate assistance programs.

