



Environmental Management Systems and Federal Electronics Stewardship

Updated: 6/28/2012

PURPOSE

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions about the connection between an Environmental Management System (EMS) and federal electronics stewardship.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND FEDERAL ELECTRONICS STEWARDSHIP

What is an Environmental Management System?

An environmental management system (EMS) is the part of an organization's overall management system that integrates environmental concerns and issues into the organization's management processes. An EMS helps organizations avoid environmental problems by increasing awareness and developing and implementing sustainable activities and processes.

EMSs may help federal agencies and facilities improve regulatory compliance and environmental performance, increase overall efficiency and accountability, reduce operational costs and potential liability, and enhance employee morale and community relations.

Why is EMS implementation important to the federal government?

Because of its size, geographic distribution, and range of activities, the federal government has the potential to significantly impact the environment. A well-implemented EMS helps manage that impact at both the facility and agency level, and government-wide.

Under Executive Order (E.O.) 13514, *Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance*, federal agencies must continue to implement environmental management systems at all appropriate organizational levels to ensure performance necessary to meet the E.O. goals.

What are federal agencies and facilities required to do?

Federal agencies are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate facilities or organizations develop, implement, and maintain an EMS. Federal agencies may develop, implement, and maintain an EMS at both the organizational or facility level and at the agency or component level. Federal agencies should consult the Interagency Environmental Leadership Workgroup for additional guidance. Federal facilities should consult with their agency for additional guidance.

Why should management of electronic equipment and data centers be a main part of an EMS?

Most federal agencies and their facilities have general office space and commonly use electronic equipment such as computers, monitors, printers, and copiers. Federal facilities also rely heavily on the services provided by data centers, which may be operated on-site. When a facility investigates how its operations impact the environment, it may find that the adverse environmental impacts associated with electronic equipment and data center use - such as energy consumption and solid and hazardous waste generation - are substantial and can be targeted for reduction. Purchasing environmentally preferable electronic equipment, and managing and disposing of it in an environmentally responsible way, can help a facility reach EMS targets.

Additionally, E.O. 13514 requires federal agencies and facilities to use EMS as a framework for meeting the E.O. 13514 goals, including those related to electronics stewardship.

What is the connection between the Federal Electronics Challenge and an EMS?

The goal of an EMS is for an organization to achieve and demonstrate sound environmental performance by addressing the impact of their activities on the environment. The overall FEC program goal for all Partners is to reduce life-cycle environmental impacts of electronic products and services. An EMS provides the structure and framework to achieve that goal. The FEC and associated resources and



Environmental Management Systems and Federal Electronics Stewardship

Updated: 6/28/2012

guidance help federal agencies and facilities achieve environmental improvements through better management of electronic equipment and data centers throughout the life-cycle.

How can participation in the FEC support our EMS?

The FEC can provide helpful tools and assistance to “populate” the elements of an EMS, including:

- Identifying types of activities associated with electronics purchasing, use, disposition, and data center management which have an environmental impact.
- Identifying roles and responsibilities.
- Providing access to other federal experiences.
- Developing goals and measuring progress by outlining ways to help establish baselines, measure progress, and by providing recognition.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions related to this resource or need other assistance with the Federal Electronics Challenge, please contact your Regional Champion: <http://www2.epa.gov/fec/technical-assistance>.

Visit the FEC online: <http://www2.epa.gov/fec/>

E-mail the FEC: fec@epa.gov