

EMS Factsheet

BS 8555/IEMA Acorn Scheme



Overview

Origins and development

The IEMA Acorn Scheme is an officially recognised EMS standard recommended by the UK government for organisations evaluating and improving their environmental performance. It is based on the British Standard BS8555 and is comprised of a step by step approach with 6 levels. The scheme was developed following the success of Project Acorn, an initiative funded by the Department for Trade and Industry, and the subsequent publication of the BS 8555 EMS standard. BS 8555 provides guidance on how to implement an EMS. It includes two different types of management guidelines. BS 8555 includes EMS (ISO 14001) and Environmental Performance Evaluation (ISO 14031) tools.

Objectives

The EMS scheme aims to encourage organisations to demonstrate that they are proactive in their approach to the management of their environmental impacts and are committed to improving their environmental performance. Thus, a key aspect of the scheme is that of environmental performance improvement and reduced environmental impacts of company activities, products and services over time.

Implementation structure

There are 4 principal bodies that are involved in the scheme. The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) is the scheme owner whose primary function is to set the scheme criteria and to operate a register of organisations that have been inspected. The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of an accreditation service for inspection bodies participating in the scheme. Acorn inspection bodies undertake inspections according to the criteria defined in BS 8555 and in accordance with the requirements set out in the scheme's documentation. Finally, participating organisations implement the requirements set out in the different phases of BS 8555 and demonstrate to Acorn Inspection Bodies that the stage profiles and achievement criteria have been effectively met.

EMS in brief

Key characteristic

BS 8555 is an officially recognised standard by the UK government

Implementing institution

British Government

Available since

April 2003

Geographical scope

United Kingdom

Target group

All sectors

Size of targeted companies

Small and medium sized enterprises

Total number of certifications

500

Number of participants in the process of certification

300

Most important drivers and barriers

Drivers

- Available marketing tools
- Cost/resource savings
- Customer/supplier demand
- Environmental benefits
- Legal security
- Political support/financial incentives
- Proof of corporate social responsibility
- Other: n/a

Barriers

- EMS not widely recognised
- High implementation costs
- Little similarities to EMAS or ISO 14001
- Perceived complication/unattainability
- Other: n/a

Yes

No

The EMS in detail

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commitment of top management: Phase 1 of the EMS scheme requires commitment of top management as a first step.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environmental review: Based on the organisation's environmental performance related to direct and indirect environmental aspects/impacts of its activities, processes, products, and services. Criteria for the environmental review are defined in BS 8555 and are very similar to the EMAS environmental criteria.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environmental policy or guidelines: An environmental policy with initiatives for environmental improvement is required and is based on the findings of the organisation's baseline environmental assessment.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Proof of legal Compliance: Compliance with environmental requirements and control measures to ensure continued compliance with these requirements on an ongoing basis are required.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Objectives and environmental management programme: Organisations are required to define their environmental management programmes with designated responsibilities, timescales and resource requirements for meeting stated objectives and targets.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Definition of organisational structure at company level: The organisation must assign the roles & responsibilities of employees involved in the implementation of the EMS.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Training and education requirements: The EMS provides a group training workshop for each phase of the EMS.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Communication (internal and external): The EMS promotes the involvement of internal staff and gives guidance on communications with external interested parties, and internal communications.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Documentation requirements: Documentation is covered in Phase 4 of the EMS, where record keeping, document control, and documentation of the EMS are the focus. There are no additional requirements of documentation than those specified by ISO 14001.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Internal follow-up/ checking and corrective action/ continuous improvement: Requires the establishment of internal audit as well as corrective and preventative action procedures. Continuous improvement is required and implementing the scheme therefore acts as a stimulus for innovation.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Management review: An annual management review is advised by the EMS. Periodic management reviews to assess progress against stated objectives and targets, environmental performance, and the performance and suitability of the EMS itself is also strongly suggested.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environmental report/ statement or similar publication by the participants of the EMS: Phase 6 of the EMS states that organisations must produce an 'environmental statement' in accordance with EMAS requirements.

Yes/Required
 Partially addressed
 Not indicated or not required

External audit/certification

Is an external audit required? Yes

Responsibility for external audit and qualifications needed: The accreditation of Acorn Inspection Bodies shall be undertaken by the UKAS or any other recognised national accreditation body.

Audit period: Annual.

Certification: Certificates of the Acorn Scheme given to organisations that have been successfully met all of the appropriate stage profile and achievement criteria of BS 8555.

Similarities to EMAS

- Initial environmental review
- Environmental policy
- Legal compliance
- Employee involvement
- Planning
- Implementation
- Checking and corrective action
- Continuous improvement
- Management review
- Certification
- Environmental statement
- Validation of environmental statement

Relation of the EMS to EMAS: Very close

(Note: Stage 6 of the EMS implies that the company meets all EMAS criteria)

For further information on the EMS, please contact:

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