



Environmental Management Policy

An environmental policy must not be viewed in isolation, but should be seen as an integral part of the organisation's business policies. In general terms, it should be:

- company-wide, in that it applies to all parts of the organisation and is not restricted to particular aspects of the organisation's operations or focused on individual departments
- strategic, so that the stated aims and objectives of the policy are directed towards an organisation's activities, products and services.

More specifically, an organisation's environmental policy is a statement of intent, designed to reduce environmental impacts and improve performance.

Guidance on the principles of environmental policy is set out in ISO 14001 and the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). They are broadly similar and are defined as follows.

- ISO 14001 *Environmental Management Systems — Requirements with Guidance for Use* defines environmental policy as the: "overall intentions and direction of an organization related to environmental performance as formally expressed by its top management".
- EMAS defines environmental policy as: "the overall intentions and direction of an organisation relating to its environmental performance as formally expressed by top management including compliance with all applicable legal requirements relating to the environment and also a commitment to continuous improvement of environmental performance. It provides a framework for action and for the setting of environmental objectives and targets".

In general, these statements are often arranged in two parts.

- A general declaration of the organisation's commitment to environmental protection, which recognises the importance of environmental quality at local and global levels.
- A list of policy aims and objectives describing how continual improvement in overall environmental performance will be achieved. They are likely to include a commitment to reduce waste and to meet, and possibly exceed, the requirements of all relevant

environmental legislation. EMAS requires organisations to demonstrate compliance with regulations in order to gain accreditation.

All organisational activities have potential environmental effects or impacts — they may arise from purchasing, manufacturing, energy use, distribution or waste management. The role of the environmental policy is not to list individual initiatives or projects to deal with each impact, but to create a framework around which such initiatives can be developed, which will lead to improved overall environmental performance.