

# the environmentalist

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- A market for recyclates

The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment is a non-profit making organisation established to promote best practice standards in environmental management, auditing and assessment. Its independence is maintained by a growing membership drawn from industry, environmental consultancies, local and national government and educational establishments.

IEMA is responsible for the Acorn Scheme and is the Competent Body in the UK for EMAS, the European Union's Eco Management and Audit Scheme: [www.emas.org.uk](http://www.emas.org.uk)

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# the environmentalist

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A honeycomb is a mass of hexagonal wax cells built by honey bees in their nests to contain their larvae and stores of honey and pollen. Bees are vital in the food chain as crop pollinators and it is feared their decline will impact on food production. Scientists at Dundee University are now to investigate what is killing off honey and bumble bees, looking into whether pesticides are harming their brains. Researchers have been given £1.8m to examine if pesticides have affected the brain function of bees and whether they have damaged things like their navigation and foraging skills. The bee population has fallen by up to 15 per cent over the two years to April 2009, while the population of butterflies and other insects is also down.

Cover photo © blickwinkel / Alamy

# 14001 certification doesn't cost – it pays



*Health Safety and Environment Manager **David Doherty** has been responsible for the implementation of ISO 14001 at his company. He says that the process has delivered 'a ten-fold payback'*

**A**s a provider of environmental services, it is doubly important for ALcontrol Laboratories to demonstrate that it operates an effective Environmental Management System (EMS). The company has therefore partnered with Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance (LRQA) over the last seven years to develop an EMS that impacts upon every aspect of the business and delivers continuous environmental improvements.

The company provides testing and analytical services for soil, water, food, oil, asbestos and air to help clients demonstrate compliance with regulations and achieve their health, safety and environmental goals. Over 2,000 employees in 30 laboratories across 11 European countries

support a global customer base providing millions of tests per year.

## **Why ISO 14001?**

A key feature of the brand is the provision of laboratory results that give customers confidence to act. Certification to internationally accepted standards is therefore one of the ways in which this confidence can be delivered, particularly when certification is provided by an independent and reputable third party.

The process of achieving certification to ISO 14001 across all of its sites is also designed to meet stakeholder needs; to help comply with regulations; to improve environmental management; to improve efficiency; and reduce costs.

## **ISO 14001 in action**

Within ISO 14001 the company has sought to reduce waste volumes through packaging minimisation. For example, when possible, deliveries are received on pallets rather than individual boxes and every effort is made to reuse or recycle materials; empty chemical bottles are treated in a furnace and reused; and laboratory consumables are cleaned for re-use. In addition, the deployment of compactors and balers has resulted in up to 50 per cent of waste being diverted from landfill on some sites, with an associated reduction in waste costs.

A number of initiatives have been introduced to reduce energy use. For example: a traffic light system enables staff to identify which electrical equipment

can be turned off; extraction systems are only operated when needed; and storage has been reorganised so that some walk-in cold stores could be de-commissioned. These measures, combined with good servicing schedules and staff awareness of energy usage, saw a reduction in energy consumption by 17 per cent for 2009 in comparison with 2007. This equates to over 1.5 million kWh saved over the past two years which is a cost saving of over £100,000.

But implementing and maintaining an EMS is not just a box ticking exercise; we think it also delivers tangible business results as well.

The processes that have been established on the road to certification have generated benefits in seven key areas:

#### 1. Regulations

In 2003 the company had identified around 25 different regulations. This has now risen to almost 200 regulations and guidelines that apply to different parts of the business.

#### 2. Less wastage/cost savings

Recycling and waste reduction have become key elements of the EMS and estimated cost savings from reduced waste disposal alone amount to over £50,000 per year. The Hawarden site has demonstrated a 40 per cent reduction in liquid waste for incineration and the Rotherham site has seen a 30 per cent increase in recycling (comparing 2009 with 2008).

#### 3. Stakeholder approval

A staff survey demonstrated approval for the company's environmental credentials. As a provider of environmental testing services, staff would not be content if their employer's environmental performance did not meet or exceed their own.

#### 4. Risk reduction

LRQA's Business Assurance methodology specifically addresses areas of existing and potential risk throughout the assessment process. It also identifies areas of vulnerability to future legislation and helps the business to adapt accordingly. This vigilance is ongoing because of the dynamic nature of the business and the regulatory framework within which the company operates.

#### 5. Increased sales

Certification provides commercial benefits in two distinct ways. Firstly, it provides a competitive advantage and

is a specific requirement in many of the bids that we make to local authorities, waste contractors, environmental consultancies and engineering contractors. Furthermore, as the company is part of the supply chain, its clients can demonstrate compliance with some of their own environmental objectives. The second benefit of ISO 14001 stems from the improved

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**“Implementing and maintaining an EMS is not just a box-ticking exercise; we think it also delivers tangible business results as well”**

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efficiency – process-driven cost reduction in areas such as energy and waste help the business to remain as competitive as possible, which is particularly important in the current economic climate.

#### 6. Business resilience

ISO 14001 provides stakeholders with confidence that every environmental aspect of the business is being managed effectively.

#### 7. Environmental compliance

An effective EMS ensures that the company complies with environmental regulations such as discharge consents and avoids the bad publicity and costs that would be associated with failure.

The company is now in the process of furthering its original goal of one comprehensive EMS certificate to cover all its sites. The belief is that this will deliver additional significant savings and efficiencies at each location, as well as for the organisation as a whole.

Many look upon certification as a cost, but ALcontrol has clearly demonstrated that the right level of commitment coupled with the right partner, can generate significant bottom line benefits. ■

*David Doherty*

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