SafeContractor
Alcumus

Environment policy and management systems

Guidance Note 42
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Introduction

This Guidance Note gives practical information about creating an environmental policy.

A policy template has been included in Appendix 1. You may use the template to construct your own environmental policy document. The policy you develop should be relevant to the nature and scale of your activities and set out the responsibilities for environmental management throughout your company. You must ensure that all references to **Alcumus SafeContractor Certification** have been removed and that the final document is clearly incorporated into your existing management system and company documentation.

What is an environmental policy?

An environmental policy is a short statement which lays out your company's attitude towards the environment. It should recognise that your business impacts upon the environment both through local operations and, more broadly, in terms of raw materials usage, energy usage and discharges. It should set realistic and achievable targets for improvement that are relevant to your company's activities and practices.

Why do I need an environmental policy?

Regardless of a company's shape, size and business sector, all companies face an ever increasing number of challenges relating to their environmental performance.

There is no specific legal requirement for an environmental policy, although there is a vast range of environmental legislation which may affect your company (with differing legislation in differing parts of the UK) and an environmental policy is the best way of demonstrating that your company has a clear intent to comply with this legislation.

In order to achieve this, the policy should include:
1. A statement of commitment to reduce environmental impact.
2. A clear outline of all staff responsibilities.
3. How the policy should be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.
4. An identification of your company's environmental aspects (e.g. the company's activities, products and services which can interact with the environment).
5. Whether any legislation is relevant to your environmental aspects.
6. A framework for reducing environmental impact.
7. Clear achievable targets.
8. How progress will be monitored and audited.

Your environmental policy should be a live management resource and the lynchpin of your company environmental management system (EMS). The policy should be reviewed and audited annually with a target towards continuous improvement.

What is an environmental management system (EMS)?

In addition to the environmental policy, an environmental management system should include:

1. **Environmental Procedures.**

   You need to create an Environmental Aspect Register which includes:
   i) A list of environmental aspects.
   ii) The environmental impacts of these aspects (each environmental aspect may have more than one environmental impact)
   iii) An assessment of their significance.

   Remember that some environmental aspects may be influenced by people and organisations outside your own company. For example, packaging sent by your suppliers may become part of your own waste stream.

   Your EMS needs to include the procedures your company follows in order to address the environmental aspects both in normal and 'abnormal' conditions such as emergencies.

   Such procedures include:
   i) Waste management
   ii) Energy management
   iii) Fuel use management
   iv) Water use management
   v) Effluent disposal management
   vi) Use of natural resources
   vii) Emergency preparedness and response.

   Please note: the above is not an exhaustive list.

   The procedures should be supported with documents which ensure their implementation such as:
   i) For normal operations: work instructions, planned preventative maintenance plans, training etc.
   ii) For 'Abnormal' operations: inspection checklists for the integrity of bunds, spill kits which are available to trained staff etc.

   A log of these documents should be contained within a Document Index in your company EMS.

2. **A Legal Register.**

    This includes:
    i)   Details of relevant environmental legislation.
    ii) Details of what your company needs to do to comply with the legislation.
    iii) Evidence of auditing and compliance.

3. **Objectives & Targets.**

    Objectives and targets are established to monitor, control and reduce significant environmental aspects.

    Each target may be split into a series of tasks within a management programme and progress should be tracked in a simple table.

4. **Monitoring & Measurement Data.**

    Monitoring and measurement data can be used to demonstrate progress and can be as simple as taking regular meter readings and comparing against the previous years' benchmark or consumption prior to and after a specific environmental campaign (e.g. energy reductions following a 'switch-off' campaign).

5. **Evidence of Audit and Review.**

    This is essential to keep the EMS functioning and set on achieving its objectives, helps maintain commitment, and raise issues with progress.

    It is essential that you involve staff with the EMS and communicate any changes to them.

Further environmental management information can be found on the following websites:

General environmental advice: http://www.netregs.org.uk/

England: http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/

Northern Ireland: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/index.htm

Scotland: http://www.sepa.org.uk/
                                    http://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/

Wales: http://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/?lang=en

Appendix 1

An example of an environmental policy

[Business name]

Environmental policy

Introduction and aim
[Business name] is a [business description] business, operating from a site in [name of town/city]. Our main services are [list services here]. We recognise that our operations result in emissions to air and water, and the generation of waste. It is our aim to comply with legislation and other requirements, continue to reduce the environmental impacts of our business and operate in an environmentally responsible manner. This policy describes how we will achieve our aim.

Responsibility
This environmental policy applies to all of our operations including management, office services, site operations, and procurement. [Name and title] has overall responsibility for ensuring that sufficient resources are made available to enable the business to achieve our environmental objectives and targets and that the policy is implemented.

[Name and title] has the day to day responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of this policy are being followed and for monitoring the effectiveness of the objectives. However, all employees have a responsibility in their area to ensure that the aims and objectives of the policy are met.

Objectives
During [Year] and [Year], we aim to (add or delete topics below where relevant):

- make efficient use of natural resources by conserving energy and water, minimising waste and recycling where possible
- meet our duty of care requirements in relation to waste by ensuring the safe keeping, transportation and subsequent recovery or disposal of waste
- use recycled construction materials whenever these can be commercially justified
- keep transport use to a minimum and regularly service vehicles to maintain their efficiency
- work with suppliers to ensure they recognise and reduce the environmental impact of their products and transportation
- include environmental considerations in investment decisions for new plant, equipment or working practices
- inform and train all employees of the companies environmental objectives and how they can assist in meeting targets
- use the most environmentally friendly cleaning products whenever possible

Targets

To achieve our aims, we have set ourselves the following targets (add or delete where applicable):

- reduce vehicle emissions to air by the scheduling of work to reduce mileage and servicing all vehicles
- reduce the generation of general and hazardous wastes by reducing the amount of stock held in stores and ensuring all jobs are accurately scoped and priced to ensure material usage is minimised
- recycle as much paper, cardboard, plastic and metal waste generated in the office as possible
- reduce paper usage by increasing the use of e-mail and electronic documentation
- reduce energy consumption by monitoring energy usage and training staff on basic housekeeping

Monitoring and auditing

Progress against these objectives will be monitored through a number of mediums including (add or delete topics below where relevant):

- Annual management review of this environmental policy and any associated environmental procedures
- Regular internal audits of environmental procedures
- The monitoring of environmental objectives and associated KPI's / targets
- Monthly management meetings.

Communication

This environmental policy is available at [location]. All members of staff will receive training on the environmental responsibilities of their role, and will be informed of any updates or revisions via e-mail or team meetings.

Signed _____
[Name and position]

[Date]