



Strategy for Determining the Role of Environmental Management Systems in Regulatory Programs

On April 12, 2004, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a new *Strategy for Determining the Role of Environmental Management Systems (EMSs) in Regulatory Programs (EMS Strategy)*. The *EMS Strategy* encourages carefully designed experimentation to determine whether EPA and States, by considering EMSs in permits and regulations, can achieve better environmental results at less cost, improve compliance, target resources more effectively, and enhance public involvement.

The *Strategy* responds to increasing stakeholder interest in EMS use in permits and rules with some States already initiating such programs and more expected to do so in the future. Projects conducted under the *Strategy* will be based on a defined set of principles, policy ideas to test, and design considerations to ensure a continued high level of health and environmental protection.

EPA policy is to encourage the widespread use of EMSs, across a range of organizations and settings, with particular emphasis on adoption of EMSs to achieve improved environmental performance and compliance, pollution prevention through source reduction, and continual improvement. EPA will implement the new *EMS Strategy* within the broader context of the Agency's substantial success working with interested parties to promote voluntary EMS use.

EMSs do not replace the need for regulatory programs but, where properly designed and implemented, can complement them. The new *EMS Strategy* does not amend existing EMS policy nor does EPA intend to mandate the use of EMSs in permits or rules. Rather, EPA will use the *Strategy* to determine the benefits and pitfalls of providing options, within the regulatory structure, for organizations that choose to adopt EMSs. EPA hopes that this experimentation will position it to consider broader policy implications within approximately 3 years.

EPA encourages interested stakeholders to review the *EMS Strategy* and share viewpoints, reactions, and suggestions with the Agency. EPA welcomes general feedback on our priorities in this area, as well as input provided in the context of EPA-State-stakeholder collaboration on specific experimental projects.

States or others interested in carrying out experimental projects should feel free to contact EPA at any time (please contact Beth Termini at (617) 918-1662, termini.beth@epa.gov, or the Office of Environmental Policy Innovation at (202) 566-0495).