

# EMS: A Better Bottom Line for Local Government

Environmental Management Systems

## What is an EMS?

An Environmental Management System (EMS) is a “Best Practices” tool that enables local government officials to set goals with respect to managing their facilities’ environmental impacts and to establish planning, staffing, and operational procedures needed to achieve those goals. An EMS provides a systematic way to review and improve operations for better organizational performance. By incorporating environmental considerations into an organization’s decision-making structure, an EMS introduces employees to more efficient business processes. This often leads to enhanced operational effectiveness and a better bottom line. Experience has proven that investment in an EMS can mean money saved, reduced insurance premiums, improved bond ratings, and greater regulatory flexibility, as well as improved confidence on the management of environmental issues.



"As the environmental liabilities of local governments increase, it's more important than ever that jurisdictions have management tools in place to meet their regulatory requirements. Environmental Management Systems (EMSs) provide a tool for local government facilities to boost efficiency, reduce costs, improve bond ratings, and meet state and federal standards."



[www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org)

Robert J. O'Neill, Jr.  
Executive Director  
International City/County  
Management Association



## EMS Benefits

An EMS delivers big benefits – organizations that implement an EMS quickly discover that their investment pays off. Monetary and natural resource savings are two significant direct benefits of EMS adoption. These long-term savings produce a win-win situation for the organization, the public and regulatory officials.

PUBLIC ENTITY			
City of San Diego Refuse Disposal Division	Tri-Metropolitan Transportation District, Portland, Oregon	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection	Jefferson County, Alabama
<b>BENEFITS</b>			
over \$2 million	\$300,000	18,000 pounds waste in 3 months	Millions of dollars saved
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>			
in heavy equipment and diesel rates by shutting off equipment during breaks and lunch periods	identified as operational savings - \$66,000 of this for energy conservation	due to recycling program at DEP's W.E.S. Laboratory	due to potential bond rating improvement

## Avoiding Future Liabilities

An EMS provides future liability avoidance and promotes better working relationships with regulators. It also gives organizations a better understanding of their legal requirements and provides a consistent method for finding the root causes of non-compliance. Improved compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements can reduce penalties and remediation costs - potentially saving thousands. Organizations with EMSs no longer apply reactive quick fixes for violations, but seek to eliminate the causes of these violations and prevent future occurrences. Training, communication, monitoring, measuring and regular management review are the EMS tools used every day to make this possible.

## Reduced Insurance Premiums & Improved Bond Ratings

EMSs help reduce environmental and workplace security risks. This systems process approach has created verifiable, credible environmental results that have led to better overall organizational performance. In turn, an EMS has the potential to significantly influence financial institutions as they assess risk.

## Sample Costs

Based on data collected since 1997, the resources that public entities commit to EMS are primarily direct labor costs, with no additional employees or specialists needed on the workforce. Direct labor costs have averaged about 12 hours per employee per year to integrate EMS activities into their daily activities.

**Average Resources Used\*** = **\$95,275** (over 2 years)

**Average Labor Hours\*** = **3,074** (over 2 years)

*\*based on data collected from 23 public entities.*

### Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District, Portland, OR

5 Maintenance Facilities ♦ \$89,241 ♦ 2,809 hours

### City of Berkeley, CA

Solid Waste Management Division \$93,266 ♦ 3,813 hours

### Jefferson County, AL

General Services Dept. & Fleet Management \$92,734 ♦ 3,877 hours



#### U.S. EPA

The Agency's EMS web page providing EMS information and resources.

Jim Horne  
National Project Manager  
202-564-0571

[www.epa.gov/EMS](http://www.epa.gov/EMS)



#### PEER Center

One-stop shop for public entity-focused EMS information and resources

[www.peercenter.net](http://www.peercenter.net)



#### Global Environment & Technology Foundation

The Foundation's Web page for sustainable development initiatives.

Noeleen Tillman  
Vice President  
703-379-2713

[www.getf.org](http://www.getf.org)

## Local Government Viewpoints

"The APWA sees a tremendous upside for agencies that implement EMSs. The agencies that have successfully implemented EMSs have seen cost savings, improved compliance, developed a better standing within the community in regards to the environment, and increased agencies' staff awareness of the environmental impacts of their jobs."

Peter B. King  
Executive Director  
APWA



[www.apwa.net](http://www.apwa.net)  
American Public Works  
Association

"Pursuing an EMS has helped establish a framework for our organization to define its environmental commitment, to examine and manage the environmental impacts of our day-to-day operations, and to formalize how we do business in an environmentally sensitive manner"

Judith M. Mueller  
Director of Public Works  
Charlottesville, VA  
Former President APWA