



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 thoughtful, carefully designed EMS experimentation to determine whether EPA and our State partners can achieve better environmental results at less cost, improve compliance, use our resources more effectively, and enhance public involvement by considering EMSs in regulatory programs.

The *EMS Strategy* responds to increasing stakeholder interest in EMS use in permits and rules. Some States have already initiated such programs and more are expected to do so in the future. The *Strategy* explains the issues and considerations of interest to EPA as the Agency explores whether and how EMSs can play a role in our regulatory programs.

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. EMSs do not replace the need for regulatory programs but can complement them and indicate opportunities to streamline regulations.

The Agency will implement the new *EMS Strategy* within the broader context of EPA's substantial success working with interested parties to promote voluntary EMS use. The new *EMS Strategy* neither amends existing EMS policy nor mandates the use of EMSs in permits or rules. Rather, it will be used to determine the benefits and pitfalls of providing options, within the regulatory structure, for organizations with EMSs.

EPA is encouraging all stakeholders to share viewpoints, reactions, and suggestions on the *EMS Strategy* and its implementation, both generally and in the context of specific experimental projects. Mechanisms for implementing projects include EPA's *State Innovative Grants* program and the *Joint EPA-State Agreement to Pursue Regulatory Innovation*. The Strategy will position EPA to consider concrete policy decisions involving EMSs in regulatory programs within approximately 3 years.

[For More Information](#)

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