



## **BS 8555**

The flexible, cost-effective approach to  
implementing an Environment Management System

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**SGS**

**Regulatory compliance, rising energy and waste disposal costs, sustainability and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions targets coupled with the increasing demands of business partners and stakeholders are all adding to the pressure on companies to improve their environmental management performance.**

Yet for many companies the route to a traditional environment management system (EMS), such as ISO14001 or EMAS, has proved too cumbersome, disruptive and daunting to undertake.

BS 8555:2003 offers a six-phase structured approach, which allows companies to implement their EMS in phases and pause at each phase to fit the dynamics of their business. In this way, companies can spread the time, cost and effort to balance their commitment to the environment with growing their business.

This structured approach differs from the traditional routes to an EMS where companies achieve the rewards at the end of the process. BS 8555 delivers tangible benefits to companies at each phase in their journey.

Large organisations with an EMS already in place will also benefit from BS 8555. For supply chain leaders looking to continuously improve their environmental management performance, BS 8555 makes available the tools to engage their supply chain partners in mutually beneficial environmental management.

Supply chain leaders can specify the phases they want their suppliers to work towards, and ensure that certain environmental performance criteria are met. They can include this environmental performance data as the basis of their CSR Performance reports, saving them the time and costs of inspection, whilst satisfying the demands of their stakeholders.

This Information Paper sets out the facts about BS 8555, how organisations can get started on their journey, and the advantages supply chain leaders and their partners will gain from the standard.

## **CHALLENGES AND MARKET DRIVERS**

**UK-based organisations face increasing pressure to demonstrate their environmental management performance.**

The need for companies to implement an EMS that balances a commitment to the environment with growing the business - in as non-disruptive a way as possible - has never been more urgent.



Key drivers such as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions targets, climate change plans, environmental regulations, financial incentives, sustainability and corporate social responsibility are forcing companies to operate within environmental constraints. At the same time, they must win contracts and secure a competitive edge in the market place.

**Of course, many UK companies are already enjoying the advantages an EMS brings:**

- **Reduces business risks** in the face of increasing numbers of environmental regulations.
- **Provides assurance that procedures are in place to deliver compliance** with environmental legislation.
- **Improves resource management and generates more efficient energy use** by monitoring the use of resources, such as

raw materials, packaging and water, companies save on purchasing and disposal costs.

- **Increases awareness** of current performance levels amongst staff and customers, raising morale, service levels and customer satisfaction.
- **Attracts new employees, investors and customers** by demonstrating a system is in place for managing their environmental consideration.
- **Ensures a competitive edge in the market place** when tendering for work with central government or a local authority. Suppliers compete against each other on a scoring matrix. One of the questions might be “How do you manage your waste?” The local authority then scores the suppliers on what they have in place.

Yet for many other UK companies, especially SMEs, traditional EMSs such as ISO 14001

and EMAS have been considered too costly, too time consuming and too cumbersome to implement.

So how can Environment Managers, CSR Managers and Health and Safety Managers achieve the desired buy-in at board level and implement an EMS that balances their commitment to the environment with growing a successful business?

Fortunately, a generic standard exists that makes an EMS more accessible to SMEs than ever before, whilst also providing a tool for supply chain leaders to “green” their supply chains.

The BS 8555 guidance standard for implementing a full EMS delivers the solution. Designed originally with SMEs in mind, more and more supply chain leaders are finding the standard meets their requirements too.

## BS 8555 – THE GENERIC STANDARD

BS 8555 is the British Standard for the phased implementation of an environmental management system including the use of environmental performance evaluation.

The generic standard describes five key phases:

- Commitment & establishing the baseline
- Identifying & ensuring compliance with legal and other requirements
- Developing objectives, targets and programmes
- Implementation and operation of the EMS
- Checking, audit & management review

The sixth phase, following successful completion of the above five, prepares companies for either EMAS registration or certification to ISO 14001.

To participate in the standard, companies first need to implement the requirements of one or more of the phases. There is no requirement for them to complete all the phases. Companies can choose to be inspected to any phase level, and can remain at their chosen phase and still maintain certification.

In fact, because it describes six phases, BS 8555 provides an effective way for companies to spread the costs of implementing a generic environmental management system, whilst at the same time

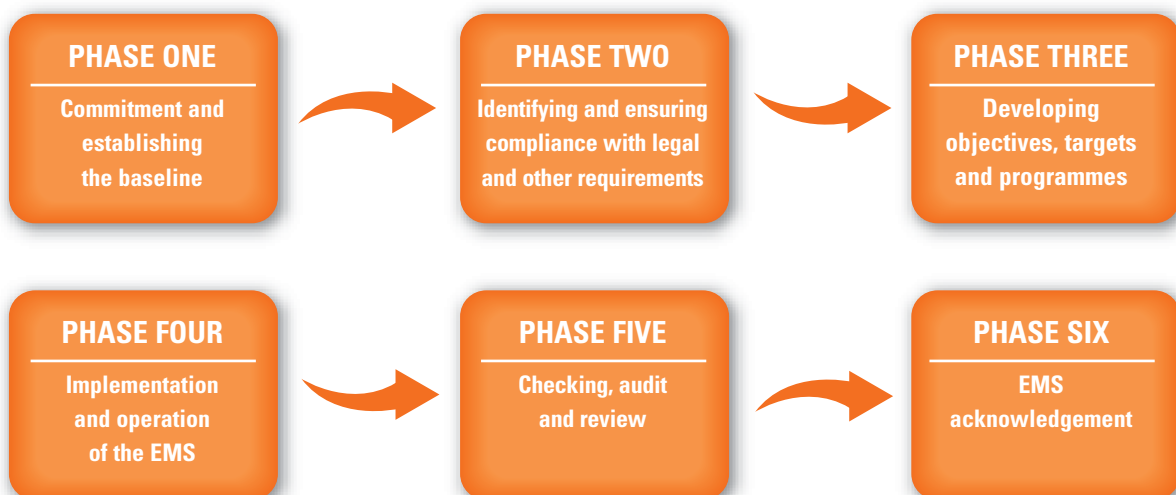
providing recognition and independent verification of achievements and progress towards obtaining ISO 14001 and/or EMAS certification.

## HOW BS 8555 WORKS

To successfully complete a phase of BS 8555, organisations must meet the requirements for that phase. This forms the basis for the inspection and certification for that phase.

Although the six phases must be completed in sequence, assessment can be either against a single phase at a time, or against a group of phases.

### THE PHASES:





On completion of the inspection, organisations receive a report, which details useful feedback on the findings and, if successful, an Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Acorn certificate.

Following a successful inspection, the organisation's details are published on the IEMA Acorn register. Organisations can also publicise their achievements with the Acorn logo.

Companies choose whether to move on to the next phase, or consolidate at that level with the requirement to continuously improve their environmental performance. They undergo annual re-inspection to maintain their certificate and entry on the register.

Completion of the sixth phase leads to registration against a recognised environmental standard such as ISO 14001 and/or EMAS.

Following successful inspection, the company is issued with a certificate, and the EMS is re-inspected every 12 months to maintain certificate validity.

**Here are the details of each phase:**

**PHASE 1 - COMMITMENT AND ESTABLISHING THE BASELINE**

Phase 1 aims to secure commitment to environmental management and performance improvement, identify the main environmental issues and opportunities, and initiate the participation of people within the organisation in developing and implementing environmental improvement initiatives.

**Main requirements**

- Ensure an explicit top management commitment to the EMS implementation project and to environmental performance improvement

- Plan the development and implementation of the EMS
- Conduct a baseline assessment in order to develop an understanding of the environmental impacts and issues facing the organisation. This is done by reference to existing management programmes and practices, stakeholders, and by identifying the environmental aspects and impacts of the organisation's activities, processes, products and services. This assessment will also help to identify opportunities for cost savings and achieving competitive advantage
- Formulate a draft environmental policy, and establish initiatives for environmental improvement, based on the findings of the baseline assessment
- Develop and implement some initial environmental performance indicators that address key environmental issues

- Develop initial approaches to employee involvement in continuous improvement, environmental training and raising awareness

### PHASE 2 - IDENTIFYING AND ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Phase 2 aims to help companies identify the relevant environmental, legal and other requirements, and to develop and implement controls measures to ensure continued compliance with these requirements on an ongoing basis.

#### Main requirements

- Identify applicable environmental legislation including laws and regulations (see [www.netregs.gov.uk](http://www.netregs.gov.uk))
- Identify any other environmental requirements that apply to the company (including codes of practice, industry standards, voluntary agreements, internal management requirements, and contractual requirements)
- Identify where and how exactly these requirements apply within the organisation

- Check the actual level of compliance with the requirements throughout the organisation, identifying areas of non-compliance and the effectiveness of controls in ensuring compliance
- Develop and implement action plans to address non-compliance situations and strengthen controls
- Ensure operational control procedures and emergency response procedures exist and relevant training programmes have been developed to support compliance with legal and other requirements
- Develop compliance indicators

### PHASE 3 - DEVELOPING OBJECTIVES, TARGETS AND PROGRAMMES

Phase 3 aims to establish the core elements of a functional EMS and develop a structured framework for ongoing systematic environmental management and performance improvement.

#### Main requirements

- Develop and apply an approach for assessing the significance of environmental aspects identified in Phase 1, appropriate for the nature and scale of the organisation

- Finalise the environmental policy, checking that aspects identified as being significant are addressed within it
- Develop objectives and targets for performance improvement, which support the policy commitments and address significant aspects and impacts
- Identify and implement environmental performance indicators to help track progress against specified objectives and targets
- Define environmental management programmes with designated responsibilities, timescales and resource requirements for meeting stated objectives and targets
- Establish effective operational control procedures in response to significant environmental aspects that have been identified
- Communicate the finalised policy, objectives, targets, indicators, and management plans as required and provide any necessary training, information and support for their implementation



#### **PHASE 4 - IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATION OF THE EMS**

Phase 4 aims to enhance the management elements of the EMS to support effective ongoing operation, and to ensure that changes affecting the organisation can be integrated into the system without causing any drops in performance. This phase, in common with the other phases, helps to address specific requirements of ISO 14001/EMAS.

##### **Main requirements**

- Confirm the environmental management structure, assigning roles and responsibilities with respect to the EMS
- Structure the training and awareness raising programmes, and implement processes for identifying training needs and planning training delivery and review
- Establish clear internal and external communication practices

- Define the relationships and interactions between different elements of the EMS
- Implement effective documentation, including control and record keeping systems
- Review and test environmental emergency preparedness and response procedures
- Develop management performance indicators to identify the effectiveness of the EMS in operation

#### **PHASE 5 - CHECKING, AUDIT AND REVIEW**

Phase 5 introduces the discipline of inspecting the EMS and undertaking a management review. This will close the continuous improvement loop for the organisation's environmental performance, and bring them into line with the management system requirements of ISO 14001/EMAS.

##### **Main requirements**

- Establish internal EMS audit procedures and programmes
- Ensure that audit findings are communicated and reviewed by management
- Establish corrective and preventative action procedures, both in relation to audits and other areas of the organisation as required
- Implement periodic management reviews to assess progress against stated objectives and targets, environmental performance, and the performance and suitability of the EMS itself
- Focus on continuous improvement initiatives that take the organisation forward to meeting their policy commitments

At the end of Phase 5, the company should have a fully functional EMS in place. The company will then be in a good position to be assessed against the requirements of ISO 14001.

### PHASE 6 - EMS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For organisations looking to gain recognition for their EMS to either EMAS registration or ISO 14001 certification, Phase 6 outlines the preparatory stages for the work. Stage 1 focuses on preparing for external assessment against ISO 14001. Stages 2 - 6 concentrate on environmental performance and the communication of information.

As part of this final stage, the organisation will where appropriate:

- Provide evidence that the EMS has been implemented and managed prior to a final certification audit against all the requirements of ISO 14001. An organisation will also have conducted a full internal environmental audit and at least one comprehensive management review

- Undertake review of baseline assessment, environmental aspects, legal compliance, employee involvement, environmental policy and audits to confirm they meet the requirements of EMAS
- Assess the environmental performance evaluation (EPE) system developed through Phases 1-5 to ensure that the data collected and information produced is sufficient for external use and/or verification as part of EMAS
- Produce an “environmental statement” in accordance with EMAS requirements

The Phase 6 achievement criterion is partly optional depending upon whether the organisation is pursuing:

- Third party certification against ISO 14001;
- Registration under the European EMAS regulation ;or
- Reassurance for customers and other stakeholders through external communication and reporting of performance information.

Full EMAS registration can only be achieved through an appropriately accredited EMAS verifier and by registering the organisation with the appropriate competent body (IEMA in United Kingdom) as required by the EMAS regulation.

### HOW MUCH DOES BS 8555 COST?

**The cost of implementing the scheme's requirements depends on a variety of factors including:**

- The availability of UK, European, regional or local funding and support
- The availability of sector support schemes
- Which phase of the scheme is being set as the ultimate company objective
- How much work the company can undertake
- The size and complexity of the organisation and its activities
- The number of external phase inspections pursued by the company
- ISO 14001 certification/EMAS registration costs, where applicable.



## KEY BENEFITS OF BS 8555

### Enables phased implementation of an EMS

BS 8555 describes a six-phase incremental approach to implementing an EMS using environmental performance indicators, leading to accredited recognition.

This flexible, structured approach is particularly valuable in the supply chain because it concentrates on the delivery of measurable benefits for all the participants.

### Delivers early recognition of achievement

Using this structured approach, organisations implement their EMS in bite-sized phases. They move at their own pace to fit the dynamics of their business.

This also means that they gain early recognition for their efforts, receiving a UKAS accredited certificate after each phase.

On successfully completing a phase, an organisation is entered onto the IMEA Acorn register - a valuable source for potential customers looking for credible suppliers demonstrating environmental improvements in their business.

### Benefits supply chain partners

Supply chain partners set their own performance indicators and enjoy improvements and savings from the start. The performance data relates back to their business, follows the classic loop of measurement, analysis and improvement, and helps to identify the areas of greatest potential return on investment (ROI).

They progress at their own pace, and can stay at a level or move on when they have sufficient resources available.

The structured approach helps to motivate staff and drive internal cultural change. It encourages a better quality of management and training, improves business efficiency and delivers early cost savings.

Outside the organisation, the standard helps to attract new customers and raise satisfaction levels amongst existing ones.

The environmental benefits are there for customers and suppliers to see, supported by accurate data. The organisation's public image and reputation are enhanced.

### Benefits supply chain leaders

Supply chain leaders can segment their supply chain by requesting that individual suppliers meet their requirements.

They can benchmark their suppliers, requiring them to achieve levels of environmental performance based on factors such as their own environmental risk, the complexity of their operations, the nature of the goods and services they are supplying, and their scope for environmental and business improvement.

They can specify environmental performance criteria, for example banning the presence of hazardous materials in products and packaging, or request that they provide information to support compliance with the WEEE and ROHS directives and the REACH regulation.

They can also request the use of a supplier's environmental performance data to include as the basis for the production of a CSR report.

By including this data in a CSR report, the supply chain leader saves time and money. Any third party verifier can review the report with greater confidence, knowing that the performance data set has already been accurately aggregated and analysed for a BS 8555 inspection.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A BS 8555 INSPECTOR

SGS United Kingdom Ltd, the world's leading inspection, testing and verification body, offers inspections to the BS 8555 standard.

When customers talk to SGS they can be sure of confidentiality and a complete knowledge of their sector. SGS understands the concerns of SMEs in all sectors and can interpret the specific requirements of a small, growing business.

In addition to BS 8555, SGS also offers a full package of environmental assessments to ISO 14001, EMAS, EUETS (European Union Emissions Trading Scheme), 14064 (Greenhouse gases), and CSR Report Verification. Customers can discuss their specific requirements.

SGS is the global leader and innovator in inspection, verification, testing and certification services. Founded in 1878, SGS is recognised as the global benchmark in quality and integrity.

### SGS INSPECTORS ARE UKAS ACCREDITED

The only route to UKAS accredited certification to BS 8555 is via the IEMA Acorn scheme. SGS is contracted to the scheme, which means customers benefit from the environmental, technical and regulatory knowledge to carry out the most meaningful and professional environmental certification inspections.

**Following their inspection, customers receive a report containing the following information:**

- The name and contact details of the organisation and the Acorn inspection body
- The scope of the inspection
- The phases of BS 8555 against which the organisation has been inspected
- Which of the stage profile and achievement criteria have or have not been met?



- Observations regarding the organisation's environmental performance, in particular the relevance and applicability of the environmental performance indicators and the organisation's performance relating to these
- For inspections undertaken for Phase 2 (Identifying and Ensuring Compliance with Legal and Other Requirements) and subsequent phases, an annex to the Acorn Inspection Report may be added at the request of the participating organisation, and be validated by the inspector. The information included in the annex must be environment-specific, and may relate to the performance of the organisation or relate to its activities, products and/or services. The aim of this is to facilitate organisations producing credible environmental information for interested parties, in particular for use in supply chains

Successful organisations receive an IEMA Acorn certificate and will need to be re-inspected every 12 months to maintain a valid certificate. Organisations issued with a certificate will also be entered onto the IEMA Acorn register.

**Organisations have flexibility in how they choose to participate in the scheme and can deploy SGS in a variety of ways:**

- Phase by phase inspection, i.e. an inspection after completing each phase
- Multi-phase inspection, where two or more phases are inspected at the same time
- The option to remain at any phase indefinitely, subject to annual re-inspection and demonstrating continuous environmental performance improvement

To begin the first phase toward successfully managing your environmental performance please call 01276 697 999 or email [uk.nowisthetime@sgs.com](mailto:uk.nowisthetime@sgs.com)

## SOURCES

**This Information Paper acknowledges the following sources:**

**The Institute of Environmental Assessment -**  
<http://www.iema.net/>

**Netregs** – provides free environmental guidance for small and medium-sized businesses in the UK –  
<http://www.netregs.gov.uk>

**Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) -**  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk>

**The Environment Agency -**  
<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business>

**Sustainable Business -**  
<http://www.edie.net/magazines>

**British Standards Institute**

[WWW.UK.SGS.COM](http://WWW.UK.SGS.COM)