

Profiting From Environmental Standards

Environmental Management Systems are not just about being kind to the environment but are an essential tool for improving the efficiency of a business, argues Catherine Golds, head of NQA

With the credit crunch upon us, stock markets around the world are in disarray and fears that we are on the brink of a recession, it is all too easy for management to decide it is time to pull in the horns, get back to basics and adopt a cautious stance to any new ideas.

It is also very easy to put off plans to work towards implementing an environmental management system (EMS). This probably stems from the history of environmental, quality and health and safety standards that, initially, were sometimes promoted as something well-managed, responsible companies should aspire to. As a result it was often large companies that first adopted these standards, perhaps driven by the prestige such an award brought, by a sense of corporate responsibility or the demands of public sector clients, such as the Ministry of Defence.

What was often ignored, and which is very relevant today, is that there are sound financial reasons for adopting any of these management systems and, particularly with an EMS, the savings can be seen very clearly. If you cut consumption of energy and water, use fewer raw materials and reduce waste, you will cut your costs and ultimately improve your bottom line, in addition to reducing your carbon footprint.

There are other, less obvious, benefits that also accrue. Just having an EMS in place will make staff more aware of the opportunities for savings in other areas. It will improve stakeholder relationships as staff, customers,



Merseyside Fire And Rescue has seen an annual 500 tonne saving in carbon emissions

neighbours and potential customers become aware that the company takes its environmental responsibilities seriously, and this will provide more opportunities to win new business.

Mann Construction

MANN PROVIDES civil engineering, groundwork services and reinforced structures to major contractors in the construction industry. Initially, the company implemented an EMS to discover and control the effect it has on the environment, but Mann has cut its operational costs and has seen a significant rise in its turnover, as well as reducing its carbon footprint.

Among the various actions taken, utilities costs are down and are now regularly monitored, with targets

for year-on-year improvement. A mixed-waste recycling scheme for paper, cardboard, plastic and aluminium cans has resulted in a reduction in the number of skips of waste being removed from head office, while paper usage overall has been cut by 10 percent. The biggest saving, however, has been fuel, which was achieved upgrading the company's fleet of HGVs and vans to more modern, fuel-efficient models – which also avoids charges for entering London's Low Emission Zone – plus better route planning, weekly checks on tyre pressures and possible fuel leaks, regular maintenance and training drivers to conserve fuel. Completing the fuel efficiency review programme resulted in the company being awarded a Fuel Champ Gold Medal.