

4.3.3 OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS DEFINED

Environmental Objectives

Environmental objectives are goals, preferably quantified, that are set by an organization to assist in the achievement of continual improvement and prevention of pollution according to commitments made in the environmental policy. When appropriate, an objective should be broken down and allocated to different departments or areas of the organization to assist in achieving the overall objective. Examples of environmental objectives are:

- Reduce sulphur dioxide emissions from manufacturing operations by 20% by the year 2003.
- Reduce the amounts of solid waste sent to landfill by 25% in two years.
- Reduce energy use (e.g., electricity, oil, coal, gas) by 5% per year for the next five years.
- Reduce the amount of process or cooling water by 20% over two years using recirculation or other conservation measures.
- Reduce effluent discharge loadings of BOD, suspended solids, metals, and/or persistent organics by 5% per year for the next five years.
- Reduce the amount of fish-food wastage in a fish-farming operation by 10% per year.
- Reduce the use of persistent pesticides and herbicides on agricultural land by 5% per year until they are eliminated.
- Eliminate the use of ozone-depleting substances in all company operations by the year 2005.
- Change to using more environmentally-friendly paint in the next year.
- Substitute a non-toxic raw material for one that is acutely toxic to fish by the end of the next fiscal year.
- Deliver a comprehensive legal awareness training program to all senior managers, department heads, supervisors, and foremen by the end of the year. Assess their retention and comprehension of the material, and re-assign duties if necessary.
- Reduce particulate emissions from the power boiler by 20% in 2003, and a further 10% by the end of 2005.
- By the end of the next fiscal year, design and test-market product packaging that can be reused.
- Replant forested areas within one year of harvesting with species that provide diversity, wildlife values, and commercial benefits.
- Harvest timber only from areas that do not contain 'at risk' species of wildlife.
- Reduce losses of fuel oil through spills and leaks from storage tanks and transfer lines to less than 50 gallons per year.
- Eliminate visible exhaust emissions from vehicles, and reduce hydraulic oil leaks to less than one per year per vehicle.

ISO 14001 4.3.3 OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS says:

The organizations shall establish and maintain documented environmental objectives and targets at each relevant function and level within the organization. Objectives and targets will be consistent with the environmental policy, including the commitment to prevention of pollution.

When establishing and reviewing its objectives and targets an organization shall consider:

- Legal and other requirements
- Significant environmental aspects
- Technological options
- Financial, operating, and business requirements
- Views of interested parties.

Environmental Targets

Environmental targets are specific and measurable performance requirements that will lead to the achievement of an environmental objective. An objective may be organization- or department-wide; corresponding targets will also be organization-based or department-based, but may also be subdivided into smaller contributions from groups or individuals. Added together, the various targets, when achieved, should result in the completion of an objective. For example:

Environmental Objective

- Reduce solid wastes going to landfill by 25% by the end of 2003

Environmental Targets

- Monitor sources, types, and amounts of solid wastes going to

landfill from every area of the organization for six months

- Identify the best opportunities for solid waste reductions by end of the first quarter of 2002
- Establish quantitative solid waste reduction objectives, targets, and plans for each area by the end of the second quarter 2002 to achieve a total reduction of 25% by the end of 2003
- Implement plans by the end of the third quarter of 2002
- Monitor amounts, types, and sources of solid wastes going to landfill from each area for the next year, implementing changes to work practices where necessary to achieve desired reductions
- Review progress, and set new objectives and targets for 2004 - 2005 by end of the third quarter of 2003.

PROCEDURE FOR ESTABLISHING ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

As with most things in ISO 14001, full participation by 'stakeholders' is the best philosophy when setting objectives and targets. In other words, those who will be responsible for achieving the objectives and targets should have input into setting them. This approach helps to generate 'ownership' of the objectives, and more enthusiastic 'buy-in' to the tasks by the departments and individuals who need to accomplish them.

ISO 14001 Specifications

The ISO 14001 Standard stipulates several criteria that must be considered when establishing environmental objectives. Specifically:

- Environmental policy commitments to continual improvement, prevention of pollution, and compliance with legal and other requirements.
- Concentration on controlling significant environmental aspects – the activities, products, and services with the highest environmental impacts – since reducing their significance (i.e., the risks associated with them) automatically lowers their impacts.
- Taking consideration of technological options and financial, operational, and business requirements means that environmental objectives and targets must be practical in terms of being technologically achievable, within the limits of available budget constraints, and consistent with operational and business strategies. In other words, objectives and targets must be realistic and attainable, not mere dreams or wish lists.
- The views of interested parties. Who qualifies as an interested party? Any individual, group, agency, or community that may be affected by or have a stake in the operations of the facility implementing the EMS. This can be a long list, including:
 - National, regional/provincial, local government officials
 - Local community representatives

- Public interest groups and other stakeholder.

The views of interested parties are also helpful when an organization makes a decision regarding communication of its environmental aspects.

Obtaining the Views of Interested Parties

Some organizations adopt a 'passive' stance to obtaining the views of interested parties, claiming that if they do not get any complaints from the public, there are no problems. ISO 14001 expects organizations to take the initiative and actively solicit opinions and suggestions from stakeholders. For many companies, this kind of 'outreach' marks a shift in philosophy from a reactive mode to a more interactive outlook.

Many kinds of techniques can be used to obtain the views of interested parties, but, in general, face to face meetings of various kinds can yield the most authentic, and therefore valuable, information. The meetings can take the form of interviews, panel discussions, public meetings, open houses, display booths in public areas or whatever mode suits the organization and the local culture. Less effective, but better than nothing, are telephone interviews or written questionnaires. It is essential that company personnel involved in gathering feedback avoid becoming defensive, explaining or justifying the organization's position. Because they do not have 'a personal agenda', neutral third parties sometimes can be more successful at eliciting valid, unbiased information than managers or employees of the organization.

Benefits of Interested Parties Surveys

By actively soliciting input from public stakeholders into their EMS plans, an organization demonstrates its commitment to environmental management, and its interest in being a good corporate citizen. Periodic interested parties surveys enable an organization to 'take the pulse' of the wider community in which it operates, and respond to changing values, perceptions, and expectations. Surprise outbreaks of protest from one or more sectors of the community are less likely when there is regular communication and exchange of ideas with the organization implementing the EMS. Most importantly, the various stakeholders appreciate their opinions being sought and their voices listened to. In other words, once more it's the right thing to do.

OTHER FACTS ABOUT OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

There are ten instances when the ISO 14001 Standard specifies that a procedure, or results from a procedure, must be documented or recorded, meaning it must be in writing, on paper or electronically. Environmental objectives and targets are one of the ten requirements for documentation.

Objectives and targets should be achievable in the time-frame set, while at the same time stretching the organization to new levels of improved performance. Management has obligations to provide adequate resources to enable employees to reach each objective, which should be regularly reviewed to ensure continuing relevance and priority.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Setting and working towards environmental objectives and targets are a key means of achieving continual improvement and the prevention of pollution as required by an organization's ISO 14001 Environmental Policy.
- To be effective, objectives and targets must be documented, specific, measurable, achievable (but not too easily), and kept up to date (i.e., maintained).
- Environmental targets support the achievement of objectives by breaking them into smaller progress goals for individual departments, groups, or persons which, when put together result in the completion of an objective.
- When setting objectives and targets, the following must be considered: legislative, regulatory, and related requirements; significant environmental aspects; technological options, business, financial, and operational requirements; and the views of interested parties.
- Interested parties surveys are good for obtaining public opinions to help shape environmental management plans and objectives and targets. They also can help to improve relations with the local and wider communities.