



Answers to Frequent Questions: Your EMS and the FEC

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PURPOSE

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions about the connection between Environmental Management Systems (EMSs) and the Federal Electronics Challenge (FEC). The FEC is an electronics management program that can exist within the structure of your EMS to improve your facility's environmental performance.

EMS AND FEC: WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?

What is an Environmental Management System?

An environmental management system (EMS) is the part of an organization's overall management system that integrates environmental concerns and issues into the organization's management processes. An EMS helps organizations avoid environmental problems by increasing awareness and developing and implementing sustainable activities and processes.

EMSs may help federal agencies and facilities improve regulatory compliance and environmental performance, increase overall efficiency and accountability, reduce operational costs and potential liability, and enhance employee morale and community relations.

Why is EMS implementation important to the federal government?

Because of its size, geographic distribution, and range of activities, the federal government has the potential to significantly impact the environment. A well-implemented EMS helps manage that impact at both the facility and agency level, and government-wide.

Under Executive Order (E.O.) 13423, Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy and Transportation Management, federal agencies must implement environmental management systems at all appropriate organizational levels to ensure:

1. Use of EMS as the primary management approach for addressing environmental aspects of internal agency operations and activities, including environmental aspects of energy and transportation functions.
2. Establishment of agency objectives and targets to ensure implementation of E.O. 13423.
3. Collection, analysis, and reporting of information to measure performance in the implementation of E.O. 13423.

What are federal agencies and facilities required to do?

The Instructions for Implementing Executive Order 13423 provide additional guidance on the use, applicability, implementation schedule, and conformance expectations of EMSs at federal agencies and facilities. Federal agencies are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate facilities or organizations develop, implement, and maintain an EMS. Federal agencies may also develop, implement, and maintain an EMS at both the organizational or facility level and at the agency or component level. Federal agencies should consult the

Implementing Instructions and the Interagency Environmental Leadership Workgroup for additional guidance. Federal facilities should consult with their agency for additional guidance.

Why should management of electronic equipment be a main part of an EMS?

Most federal agencies and their facilities have general office space and commonly use electronic equipment such as computers, monitors, printers, and copiers. When a facility investigates how its operations impact the environment, it may find that the adverse environmental impacts associated with this electronic equipment use, such as energy consumption and solid and hazardous waste generation, are substantial and can be targeted for reduction. Purchasing environmentally preferable electronic equipment, and managing and disposing of it in an environmentally responsible way, can help a facility reach EMS targets.

Additionally, E.O. 13423 and the Implementing Instructions require federal agencies and facilities to use EMS as a framework for meeting the E.O. 13423 goals, including those related to electronics stewardship.

What is the connection between the Federal Electronics Challenge and an EMS?

The goal of an EMS is for an organization to achieve and demonstrate sound environmental performance by addressing the impact of their activities on the environment. The overall FEC program goal for all Partners is to reduce life-cycle environmental impacts of electronic products. An EMS provides the structure and framework to achieve that goal. The FEC and associated resources and guidance help federal agencies and facilities achieve environmental improvements through better management of electronic equipment throughout its life-cycle.

How can participation in the FEC support our EMS?

The FEC can provide helpful tools and assistance to “populate” the elements of an EMS, including:

- Identifying types of activities associated with electronics purchasing, use, and disposition, which have an environmental impact.
- Identifying roles and responsibilities.
- Providing access to other federal experiences.
- Developing goals and measuring progress by outlining ways to help establish baselines, measure progress, and by providing recognition.

What resources are available from the FEC?

A crosswalk of FEC issues and EMS elements can be viewed or downloaded at the FEC Web site: http://www.federalelectronicschallenge.net/resources/docs/ems_tool.pdf.

The “Resources” section of the FEC web site contains other tools and documents to assist partners with electronics acquisition and procurement, operations and maintenance and end-of-life management: <http://www.federalelectronicschallenge.net/resources/>.



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REFERENCES

The text of Executive Order 13423 and the Implementing Instructions are available at:
http://ofee.gov/eo/eo13423_main.asp.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions related to this resource or need other assistance with the Federal Electronics Challenge, please contact your Regional Champion. The list of FEC Regional Champions is available at <http://www.federalelectronicschallenge.net/champions.htm>.

Partners may also request technical assistance via email to partner@electronicschallenge.net.

FEDERAL ELECTRONICS CHALLENGE

Web site: <http://www.federalelectronicschallenge.net/>
E-mail: info@electronicschallenge.net