

Federal Environmental Management
Department of Homeland Security Environmental Conference
October 29, 2003

Thank you. It's great to be here at the first ever Department of Homeland Security environmental management conference. You have a full agenda with many wide-ranging issues that, on first glance, might have you wondering if you have the right conference. I want to assure you that the issues are related and that, in fact, we're all moving to a much more integrated approach to environmental management – integrating the broad range of environmental issues and integrating environmental issues into other areas, such as security. So, as you struggle to integrate into this new department, know that you have a significant opportunity to demonstrate how to do environmental and security management integration right.

Overview of the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive

Before jumping into the substance of integration, I probably should give you some background on my and my office's role here. The Office of the Federal Environmental Executive was established in 1993 by executive order (10 years ago, last week). Our mission has evolved so that today we are working to promote sustainable environmental stewardship throughout the federal government. To meet that broad mandate, we've adopted several priority issues that we focus on, including green product purchasing, green buildings, and environmental management systems. We report to the White House Council on Environmental Quality. We help bring together different agencies, enable federal officials to look out across their silos, help develop tools and training, and play advocate to get the ball moving. Our goal is to improve the federal government's own stewardship. By helping others connect the dots, they can become more efficient and effective at meeting their mission.

Our Work to Improve Green Purchasing

One of the areas where we're working to bring together programs and work that traditionally has been siloed is with the products and services the federal government purchases. Various green product programs have been successful, such as Energy Star – others are new, like biobased and water conservation – and still others should be more successful than they are, like recycled content products. We want people to start thinking of these opportunities together, strategically.

So, we're helping the different federal green product programs work together – to improve strategic coordination and maybe even develop a single website so it's easier to find information about all the federal green product programs. We want green purchasing to be easier to do, so we want to help integrate these decisions into other daily operations. And we're working with EPA and others to identify tools to make it easier to integrate green purchasing into environmental management systems.

Our New Federal Electronics Challenge

A significant component of our green purchasing efforts focus on electronics. The federal government spends more than \$50 billion each year on IT products and services. Together with other agencies, we have developed a new effort to improve the life cycle management of federal electronic assets. It's the Federal Electronics Challenge. We're developing pilots this year and are looking for volunteer agencies and facilities now. The full program should start in the spring of 2004.

And I hope you'll join us on America Recycles Day in the Washington, D.C. area, on November 14 and 15, for another used electronics collection event, with keynotes by Acting EPA Administrator Marianne Horinko and DC Mayor Anthony Williams.

Our New Report on Federal Green Buildings

Another important area that we're focusing on is green buildings – or sustainable or high-performance buildings. The federal government owns 500,000 buildings that cover 3.1 billion square feet, so we impact a lot of land use, energy use, workers, communities, and the environment.

With hundreds of millions of visitors and workers passing through federal buildings each year, sustainable buildings can be educational showcases. And green buildings bring together many players – architects, developers, builders, operators, and tenants – and many issues – energy use, materials, acquisition, water conservation, community relations, and much more.

We recently issued a report – now up on our website, www.ofee.gov – that for the first time describes what all the Federal government is doing – policies and practices – to “green” its building stock. The report identifies some successes to date:

- Federal buildings have reduced their energy intensity by 23% since 1985.
- They've cut their carbon emissions by 2.8 million metric tons (like removing 2.1 million vehicles from the road in one year), since 1985.
- More than 110 Federal buildings are now rated Energy Star[®] for their high energy efficiency.
- And the federal government is increasingly using the U.S. Green Building Council's rating system, known as LEED[™], to improve its buildings. Eight Federal buildings already have been LEED[™] certified, and more than 60 Federal buildings are undergoing LEED[™] certification.

Our next step is to create a first-ever senior-level federal interagency green building council to better coordinate what we're doing, share successes and lessons learned, and identify opportunities for making improvements.

Our Work on EH&S Excellence – Compliance and Beyond

At the top of the list for what needs managing in a strategic, integrated manner is our objective of complying with the law. There are no ifs, ands, or buts – we have to meet the requirements. So we’re promoting the use of management systems – bringing people together from environmental, health and safety, energy, facilities, security, budget, legal, transportation, housing, and other others to work together to tackle shared problems and opportunities.

We’ve made significant progress – 20 federal facilities now are registered to ISO 14001, more than 200 federal facilities have or are far along in developing EMSs, and more than 1,000 federal employees have been trained on EMS in the last year.

Our office, EPA, and others are developing templates and modules (for such areas as electronics recycling, green purchasing, NEPA compliance, and regulatory compliance) to more clearly illustrate how these requirements can be integrated into an EMS.

We’re also looking to find ways to improve compliance assistance – how can we do a better job of having the folks who already are doing a good job share that wisdom and those lessons learned with others? OFEE and the interagency environmental management workgroup are leading a comprehensive effort for the President’s Management Council to assess agencies’ compliance assurance mechanisms. The team will review the information, develop recommendations, and promote the use of EMS.

Compliance is just the bare minimum, though. We also know that we should be striving to function more efficiently and effectively by improving our performance beyond compliance. So how do we do that? We have to integrate, across people, places, and issues. We have to integrate all that makes up “environmental,” and we have to integrate “environmental” into other issues so that we can truly be efficient and effective in meeting our mission.

EMS and Security

The management system model can be used to address security issues. The *Plan-Do-Check-Act* model is a general management tool that can be used to address a wide range of concerns. Although management systems historically have concentrated on quality and the environment, they also can significantly enhance how we address the much more visible and tangible concerns of health and safety and security. In the current heightened state of security alert and with the high public awareness and interest in national security, the timing is perfect to apply the management system model – both to what you’re asking of others and to how DHS itself functions.

Even if a management system focuses just on environmental concerns, that EMS nevertheless likely will still address several security concerns because the two are so closely related. Examples include:

- Identifying sensitive areas and weak points on a site or related to operations;

- Identifying hazardous materials that can be reduced, replaced, or eliminated, thereby reducing the onsite risk potential;
- Identifying critical security control points in regard to contractors; and helping establish robust contractor management and oversight processes; and
- Providing for strong emergency planning and response processes.

The management system model also will help reduce surprises in security concerns, such as unexpected incidents, lapses in vigilance, delayed or misdirected response, and inappropriate corrective action that may result in repeated occurrences.

As a new Department, DHS has a unique opportunity to implement EMSs in the early stages of organization formation. In addition to helping manage the environmental issues, applying the management system model to DHS could bring additional unique benefits, such as:

- Through the policy and planning process, an EMS can provide staff with a focus and an identity for top management.
- An EMS can provide a state-of-the-art management mindset. Ideally, the best time to implement such a system in an organization is when it's being created.
- And using EMSs is consistent with Secretary Ridge's management approach. Throughout his career, he has stressed the importance of implementing sound management practices in government and the importance of environmental stewardship to an efficient and secure government.

The Federal government is actively involved in several efforts where security issues and the management system model come together. First and most exciting, our office, DHS, and others are working on a pilot project partnership between the U.S. and Israel, through the Department of Commerce's United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation, to see how to integrate EMS and security issues. This project is primarily focused on protecting environmentally-oriented infrastructure such as water supplies, energy production, and gas transmission. We will be developing case studies, guidelines, and best practices.

We also are actively involved with and are tracking efforts in the U.S. and abroad about potential standards for integration of security into EMSs, or at least, using the EMS model. And EPA, through its National Homeland Security Research Center, is helping coordinate the Israel-U.S. water security effort.

Conclusion

As you can tell from these highlights in just a few areas, a lot of great things are going on in the federal government. The basic challenge we face is not how to invent the wheel but instead how to avoid continually reinventing the wheel.

We all have to be more proactive in sharing our successes and lessons learned, in reaching out to find others – in our agencies and department, across the federal

government, and in our community – to share information, ask questions, be innovative, and jointly develop tools.

We have to do a better job of setting performance expectations and measuring our progress. And, recognizing that we have limited time and limited resources, we'll have to be even more creative and efficient in how we work.

I'm confident we can do this, and I look forward to working together with you to better protect our environment and ensure homeland security.