

ETKIN SKANSKA'S ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM EARNS ISO 14001 CERTIFICATION

AGC MEMBER TAKES ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY BEYOND LEGAL COMPLIANCE

AGC member Etkin Skanska Construction Co., Farmington Hills, Mich., was recently the first construction company in Michigan to earn the voluntary international environmental management standard known as ISO 14001, marking the company's commitment to improving its environmental practices.

ISO stands for the International Organization for Standardization, located in Geneva, Switzerland. The mission of ISO is to help organizations manage the environmental aspects and impacts of their operations while continually working toward improvement. The ISO 14001 standard requires a company to devise and implement a series of practices and procedures that, when taken together, result in an environmental management system (EMS). The scope of Etkin Skanska's ISO 14001 certification—awarded by Kema Registrars Inc. in November 2000—encompasses all company procedures, including marketing, estimating, operations, and accounting.

Etkin Skanska operates throughout the Midwest and has 275 employees. The company began its ISO 14001 certification process in February 2000. Joe Casio, who represented the United States in writing the ISO 14001 standard, trained a group of about 14 Etkin Skanska employees as certified internal auditors. The company began implementing its environmental management system in March 2000. Etkin Skanska's EMS was incorporated throughout the whole company at once, as internal auditors monitored the process at each of the company's construction sites.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISO 14001

ISO 14001 is designed to help companies meet their environmental obligations and reduce the impact of their operations on the environment.

The objective of the standard is for an organization to institute an EMS that is integrated with its overall business management process. Elements of the EMS include environmental policy, planning, implementation and opera-



PART IV

ISO 14001 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The major requirements of an environmental management system (EMS) under ISO 14001 instruct a company to

1. Create a policy statement that includes commitments to

- Prevent pollution;
- Improve overall environmental performance; and
- Comply with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

2. Identify activities, products, and services that could have a significant impact on the environment.

3. Set performance objectives and targets to achieve the commitments in the company's policy statement.

4. Implement the EMS (i.e., train employees, establish work instructions and practices, etc.).

5. Periodically audit the operation of the EMS and make adjustments to it as necessary.

6. Take corrective and preventive actions when deviations from the EMS occur.

tion, checking and corrective action, and management review.

Companies may be asked to demonstrate compliance with ISO 14001 as a condition for doing business in some

markets. A good sign of the value and acceptance of ISO 14001 is the broad range of industry sectors that have been registered: about 18,000 organizations worldwide by the end of 2000.

Other potential benefits of an EMS based on ISO 14001 include

- Improvements in overall environmental performance and compliance;
- Increased efficiency and potential cost savings when managing environmental obligations; and
- Predictability and consistency in managing environmental obligations.

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

Integral to the model provided by ISO 14001 is the concept of continual improvement of the EMS. An effective EMS is dynamic to allow the company to adapt to a quickly changing business environment. Building and improving its EMS, Etkin Skanska has great opportunities to assess how the company manages environmental obligations and to find better and more cost-effective solutions. By continually reviewing what the organization does and how well it works, Etkin Skanska can ensure that its EMS will be viable and effective now and in the future.

Areas that Etkin Skanska is focusing on for improvement this year include making its EMS manual more user-friendly and enhancing the environmental standard language in its spec books. There are also plans in place to measure employee and contractor awareness of the company's EMS.

KEY EMS BENEFITS

Etkin Skanska expects to see many measurable results of its EMS by summer 2001. Through its ISO 14001 certification, Etkin Skanska's operations will yield benefits for the community and future generations through environmental responsibility that goes beyond just legal compliance and liability control. Etkin Skanska's objective is to meet or exceed all environmental regulations issued by local, state, and federal governments where the company does business. Through its EMS, the company will seek to avoid the creation

of pollution from its projects and operations and manage waste through cost-effective, safe, and responsible methods.

The company expects to see new opportunities generated by its EMS in the form of improved environmental performance; environmental cost reduction; better relations with regulators, insurers, investors, and financial markets; marketing advantages; reduced regulatory burdens through improved compliance; fewer accidents; greater employee involvement; demonstration of responsible management to customers and the community; and better control of liabilities.

"ISO 14001 is important to us because it deals with the environment we live and work in," says Tom Landry, president of Etkin Skanska. "As a father and a grandfather, I am concerned about the quality of life for our future generations. We need to be proactive today in shaping what tomorrow will be."

APPLYING ISO 14001 TO CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

When it comes to meeting its EMS objectives, Etkin Skanska takes a proactive approach to the special challenges presented by the multiple layering of construction projects.

"Each site is unique. Etkin employees and contractors each have a different scope of work and environmental elements to deal with, but our regular contractors will begin to get accustomed and trained on our policy," explains Chris Toma, Etkin Skanska project engineer/environmental auditor. "We are enhancing our EMS specifications to incorporate many different environmental components. In addition, we also have onsite training for contractor employees."

Etkin Skanska provides its contractors with an "environmental tool box" for sharing the company's commitment to continuous environmental improvement that includes written specifications and training on how to perform the job within Etkin Skanska's safety and environmental guidelines. It ensures that the contractor has the knowledge needed to perform construction activities at the site with full attention to a safe and sound environment. The specifications identify all of the construction activities that will have or may have a significant impact on the environment. The plan includes

steps the contractor can take to meet or exceed regulations and may address issues such as controlling soil erosion and sedimentation; minimizing dust and noise; storing and handling fuels; managing waste with practices such as recycling paper and batteries; preserving trees; protecting wetlands and endangered species; and properly handling hazardous materials.

When applying its EMS to construction projects, Etkin Skanska determines and monitors the specific construction activities that may potentially have an adverse effect on the environment and looks for ways to protect habitats, wetlands, and other sensitive ecological resources present on the site and the surroundings. By monitoring and setting up guidelines for the trades whose actions can affect the environment, the company can control the potential for pollution to the site. Etkin Skanska also strives to diminish its consumption of natural resources through the cost-effective use of recycled and reused materials and the conservation of energy and water.

"We are always looking for ways to recycle or reuse material that is already on the site. Not only is this cost-effective for the client, but everyone benefits when it helps the environment," says Toma.

Etkin Skanska's effective environmental management uses a systematic approach to planning, controlling, measuring, and improving its environmental efforts. Not all environmental problems need to be solved by installing expensive pollution control equipment. For example, the company expects to see measurable cost-savings as a result of its immediate plans to place separate dumpsters for various types of construction debris on its job-sites, as outlined in the company's EMS.

"But it isn't just on projects where we can apply ISO 14001 information," says Landry. "We can incorporate our environmental awareness message as part of the safety awareness program we have for the elementary students of school districts we work for. We can help educate our future leaders on the importance of our environment."

WEAVING EMS INTO THE FABRIC OF THE BUSINESS

Etkin Skanska's environmental leadership is based in its efforts to involve

all employees in the EMS through education, awareness, and training in order to make the EMS part of the fabric of its business. Some organizations seeking ISO 14001 certification enlist the help of an external consulting firm, but Etkin Skanska chose to pursue certification independent of outside help.

"Our company's vision was that if this was going to be our EMS, we would implement it ourselves through teamwork, and hence, meet the requirements to pass the certification audit—which we did," says Toma.

He credits the company's success to not only teamwork, but also the leadership of David Korman, environmental manager from the organization's parent company, Skanska USABuilding Inc.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE


Leaders at Etkin Skanska realized that they, like many other organizations, might be increasingly challenged to demonstrate their commitment to the environment. They decided implementing an EMS and obtaining ISO 14001 certification made good business sense. By helping to identify the causes of environmental problems, and then eliminating them, an EMS can save companies time and money, as well as benefit the community and future generations by protecting the environment. Etkin Skanska saw that an EMS is an investment in the long-term viability of the organization by helping to keep existing customers and attracting new ones.


Of course, there is some work involved in planning and implementing an EMS, but Etkin Skanska found that the development of an EMS could be a vehicle for positive change and that the benefits of an EMS far outweighed the potential costs.


—By Tom Landry, president, Etkin Skanska Construction Company.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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