

# What About the Impact of Environmental Issues and Associated Regulation on my Business?

Here is a summary of the environmental issues which may affect your business:

- **Climate change.** Global warming caused by the overuse of fossil fuels, rising sea levels due to melting of the polar icecaps, land loss and cliffs falling into the sea, as well as the emissions of greenhouse gases from cars, vans and lorries.
- **Conservation.** Loss of genetic diversity, mass extinction of species, invasive species, habitat destruction and fragmentation, pollinator decline, coral bleaching and whaling.
- **Dams.** The environmental impact of building dams and diverting rivers.
- **Energy.** Energy conservation, renewable energy development, usage and commercialisation.
- **Intensive farming.** Overgrazing of livestock, irrigation issues and environmental effects of meat production.
- **Land degradation.** Overall land pollution, desertification, soil conservation, soil erosion, soil contamination and soil salination.
- **Pollution.** Air, light, noise, thermal pollution.
- **Water pollution.** Acid rain, eutrophication (which reduces oxygen levels in watercourses), ocean dumping, oil spills and water shortages.
- **Resource depletion.** Exploitation of natural resources.
- **Fishing.** Blast fishing, bottom trawling, cyanide fishing, ghost nets, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, environmental effects of fishing and overfishing.
- **Logging.** Clearcutting, deforestation, illegal logging.
- **Mining.** Acid mine drainage.
- **Toxins.** Chlorofluorocarbons, DDT, dioxin, heavy metals, herbicides, pesticides, toxics use reduction and toxic waste.

## ISO14001

Ideally, all organisations should have an environmental policy and an accompanying Environmental Management System. The ISO14000 series of standards is a guide to environmental management principles, systems and supporting techniques.

Certification is voluntary and training is available to help you do this.

Certification to ISO14001 typically takes 6-12 months.

## Updates on Environmental Law

For a digest of changes and proposed changes to UK environmental and climate change related legislation, including Health and Safety legislation, click on this link:

<http://www.jpdc.co.uk/intouch/index.php>

## Top Ten Tips for becoming a more environmentally friendly business

1. **Go paper-free.** Encourage staff to avoid printing documents unless absolutely necessary. Change printing properties so that, where possible, they print two sheets per page. Old documents can also be used as scrap paper before being recycled.
2. **Turn it off.** Electrical equipment being left on unnecessarily is one of the biggest contributors to the UK's carbon emissions. Introduce a company policy that whoever leaves the office last is responsible for ensuring that all computers, lights and printers are turned off. Think about putting time switches on certain equipment, so that it is off overnight and at weekends.
3. **Recycling.** Consider having separate bins for waste paper and cardboard, as well as for any glass or plastic used in packaging etc.
4. **Use sustainable products.** Use recycled and sustainable products wherever possible. This can be anything from using recycled paper for printing to buying notebooks from fair trade organisations. Reuse items such as carrier bags and food

containers. Think about how many bags the people in your office uses each lunchtime to take a sandwich from the shop to their desk.

5. **Energy saving appliances.** Make sure any new office equipment has an Energy Star Label. Old refrigerators can often use up to 50% more electricity than newer models, so it pays to replace them.
6. **Lighting up.** Use energy saving lightbulbs. Standard bulbs can waste up to 95% of electricity as heat, whilst new bulbs are designed to be more efficient and can last up to ten times longer.
7. **Sharing is caring.** Small businesses often find it difficult to benefit from economies of scale when purchasing stationary etc. Not only does this make the process more expensive but it harms the environment as the packaging and transportation increase. Consider joining together with other companies in the office to bulk-order together. Some serviced office providers also offer their clients a bulk-order service through which you can simply add your requirements to their orders and benefit from the cost savings.
8. **Tube not taxi.** As much as we might not wish them to be, meetings are a necessary part of business life. However, encouraging staff to take public transport such as bus or tube rather than driving or taking a taxi will save small businesses money and is more environmentally friendly. Being located in an office near a major station can also help cut out the need for your visitors to use taxis.
9. **Conference them in.** Meetings need not always be face-to-face. Sometimes a conference call or video-conference will be just as productive. This reduces travel time and also benefits the environment.
10. **Keep it on the agenda.** Caring for the environment needs to be an ongoing activity. Companies need to engage all employees in the process, so why not offer simple incentives? You could reward the member of staff who recycles the most paper or takes the fewest taxis each month. You could also have a suggestion box in which staff can suggest new measures that would help.

Keeping the environment at the top of everybody's agenda can save you money, benefit the planet, and make your company a more attractive place to work.

## Further Information

For more information, see:

<http://www.environmentalpolicy.org.uk>

<http://www.smeweb.com>