Developments in environmental management

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Since the implementation of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) system in Malaysia in 1998, the field of environmental management has evolved significantly. No longer is concern limited to the assessment of the environmental effects of new development projects. Increasingly attention is being drawn to the environmental impacts of existing sites, operations and activities.

This shift in focus is manifest in the increasing national and international pressures being levied upon organisations of all kinds to improve their environmental performance and to demonstrate that improvement through independent verification. Such pressures include increasingly stringent legislation, financial and insurance institutional requirements, share holder pressure, environmental pressure groups; green consumerism and greater public awareness of environmental issues world wide.

The initial response of organisations has been to carry out environmental reviews or environmental audits to evaluate their environmental performance (i.e. the impact of their activities on the environment). However, to be truly effective an environmental audit should be part of a full environmental management system (EMS) leading to reduced costs and increased market share.

The Environmental Management Standard ISO14000 is one such environmental management system. This paper looks at the history of the standard and its implications to business and industry in the Asia Pacific Region. It examines environmental management activity and developments in Indonesia and Malaysia; qualification of environmental auditors and likely certification and accreditation requirements. It concludes with a summary of the issues and a number of potential scenarios for future development of EMS in the Asia Pacific.

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