

# 14001 certification Doesn't Cost – It Pays

As a provider of environmental services, it is vitally important for ALcontrol to demonstrate that it operates an effective Environmental Management System (EMS). The company has therefore partnered with Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance (LRQA) over the last 7 years to develop an EMS that impacts upon every aspect of the business and delivers continuous environmental improvements.

ALcontrol provides testing and analytical services for soil, water, food, oil, asbestos and air to help clients demonstrate compliance with regulations and achieve their health, safety and environmental goals.

Over 2000 employees in 30 laboratories across 11 European countries support a global customer base providing millions of tests per year.



David Doherty Health and Safety and Environment Manager at ALcontrol

## Why ISO 14001?

A key feature of the ALcontrol brand is the provision of laboratory results that give customers confidence to act. Certification to internationally accepted standards is therefore one of the ways in which this confidence can be delivered, particularly when certification is provided by an independent reputable third party.

The process of achieving certification to ISO 14001 across all of its sites was also designed to meet stakeholder needs; to help comply with regulations; to improve environmental management; to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

## Beyond the Certificate

In 2003 ALcontrol chose to work with LRQA because of a requirement for certification to be provided by an organisation with a world-wide reputation that would add brand value and provide the company's customers with even greater levels of confidence. However, looking back at the partnership that developed over subsequent years, Neil Whitfield, ALcontrol Environment Officer, says, "LRQA has helped us to improve the operational performance of the whole business. The knowledge and experience of the LRQA assessors, coupled with an understanding of our business and the markets that we serve, has helped to ensure that environmental improvements are in line with the needs of the business."

## ISO 14001 in action

Within ISO 14001 ALcontrol has sought to reduce waste volumes through packaging minimisation. For example, when possible, deliveries are received on pallets rather than individual boxes and every effort is made to reuse or recycle materials; empty chemical bottles are treated in a furnace and reused, and laboratory consumables are cleaned for re-use. In addition, the deployment of compactors and balers has resulted in up to 50% of waste being diverted from landfill on some sites, with an associated reduction in waste costs.

A number of initiatives have been introduced to reduce energy. For example; a traffic light system enables staff to identify which electrical equipment can be turned off; extraction systems are only operated when needed and storage has been reorganised so that some walk-in cold stores could be de-commissioned. These measures, combined with good servicing schedules and staff awareness of energy usage, saw a reduction in ALcontrol's energy consumption by 17% for 2009 in comparison with 2007. This equates to over 1.5 million kWh saved over the past 2 years which is a cost saving of over £100,000.

It is important to note that ALcontrol is an organisation which has always viewed the route to certification as one that should deliver far more than the certificate at the end of the process. Denis Ives, EMEA LRQA Business Manager, says, "One of the prime reasons for the success of our relationship with ALcontrol is the company's desire for tangible business improvement in addition to a certificate. Our Business Assurance approach looks at the most relevant issues and risks to the organisation. Therefore, we both have the same objectives and it is the ongoing achievement of these objectives that delivers real value to the business."

## ISO 14001 deliverables

The processes that have been established on the road to certification have generated benefits in seven key areas:

### 1. Regulations

In 2003 ALcontrol had identified around 25 different regulations. However, ALcontrol is now working with almost 200 regulations and guidelines that apply to different parts of the business.

### 2. Less wastage/cost savings

Recycling and waste reduction have become key elements of the EMS and David Doherty estimates that cost savings from reduced waste disposal amount to over £50k per year. The Hawarden site has demonstrated a 40% reduction in liquid waste for incineration and the Rotherham site has seen a 30% increase in recycling (comparing 2009 with 2008).

### 3. Stakeholder approval

A staff survey has demonstrated approval for the company's environmental credentials. As a provider of environmental testing services, staff would not be content if their employer's environmental performance did not meet or exceed their own.

### 4. Risk reduction

LRQA's Business Assurance methodology specifically addresses areas of existing and potential risk throughout the assessment process. It also identifies areas of vulnerability to future legislation and helps the business to adapt accordingly. This vigilance is ongoing because of the dynamic nature of the business and the regulatory framework within which the company operates.

### 5. Increased sales

Simon Turner, Commercial Director for ALcontrol's environmental business in the UK and Ireland, says: "ISO 14001 certification provides commercial benefits in two distinct ways. Firstly, it provides us with competitive advantage and is a specific requirement in many of the bids that we make to local authorities, waste contractors, environmental consultancies and engineering contractors. Furthermore, we are part of the supply chain, so the certificate enables our customers to demonstrate compliance with some of their own environmental objectives. The second benefit of ISO 14001 stems from the improved efficiency - process driven cost reduction in areas such as energy and waste help the business to remain as competitive as possible, which is particularly important in the current economic climate."

### 6. Business resilience

ISO 14001 provides stakeholders with confidence that every environmental aspect of the business is being managed effectively.

### 7. Environmental compliance

An effective EMS ensures that the company complies with environmental regulations such as discharge consents and avoids the bad publicity and costs that would be associated with failure.



## AUTHOR DETAILS



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Steve Williams is the Business Assurance Manager for LRQA. He is responsible for defining and monitoring the service delivery process requirements for the global certification products of LRQA, helping to assure the integrity of the services delivered. He has represented LRQA externally at UK Government and European Commission meetings.

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## Summary

ALcontrol is now in the process of furthering its original goal of one comprehensive EMS certificate. Working towards certification at each individual site, the Company believes that this will deliver additional significant savings and efficiencies at each location, as well as for the organisation as a whole.

In order to build continuous improvement into the EMS it is important to partner with an organisation that is able to go beyond the certification process; to identify risk, exploit new opportunities and reduce costs through efficiency improvements. However, to achieve this, the business assurance provider must have a deep understanding of the sector.

Many look upon certification as a cost, but ALcontrol has clearly demonstrated that the right level of commitment coupled with the right partner, can generate significant bottom line benefits.