

# EPA's Region 9 Facility "Plugs-In" Electronics to EMS

An environmental management system, or EMS, addresses the needs of a broad range of interested parties and the evolving needs of society for environmental protection. It is a set of management processes and procedures that allow an organization to analyze, control, and reduce the environmental impact of its activities, products and services, and operate with greater efficiency and control. An EMS encourages an organization to continuously improve its environmental performance. Because of its size, geographic distribution, and range of activities, Federal agencies have the potential to significantly impact the environment. A well-implemented EMS helps manage that impact.

A primary purpose of an EMS is to coordinate environmental management activities into one integrated framework that enhances and improves the overall efficiency and effectiveness of these existing, but separate, environmental programs. The FEC is an environmental management program that can exist within the

structure of a facility or agency EMS to improve environmental performance.

## Improved Electronics Management Set to Reduce Energy Usage by 10 Percent

To identify potential energy savings, EPA Region 9's EMS energy subcommittee recommended an audit of the 20-story office building in San Francisco that houses the Region's nearly 900 employees. The audit revealed that computer power management and monitor power management could save an estimated 10 percent in total energy usage. Although this savings was not as substantial as the estimated 30-40 percent reduction for swapping out existing fluorescent bulbs, it required no financial investment. Given the potential energy savings and the lack of capital costs, EPA Region 9 quickly implemented the new power management programs. It configured computer monitors to use the "sleep" mode instead of a screen saver. How

did staff respond? "A few people were confused at first because their screens were dark instead of showing a screen saver," says Region 9 Environmental Protection Specialist Adrienne Priselac, "but they soon realized that they just needed to hit any key to restore power, just as they had done in the past."

## Budget Cuts Softened By Extending Useful Life of Electronics

With funding eliminated for new electronics purchases, Region 9 needed to find creative solutions for meeting user needs. It set a goal to reuse 30-40 percent of existing electronics. The Region is assessing which applications each employee needs to do his or her job and is allocating electronic equipment accordingly. Through these efforts, the Region has extended the average lifespan of computers to five years.

## Region Safely Recycles 10 Tons of Old Electronics

The Region's EMS recycling subcommittee tackled the more than 10 tons of electronics stored in an off-site warehouse. Stockpiling computers began in response to a seven-year lawsuit requiring the Agency to maintain its hard drives. Not only did EPA keep the hard drives, it also kept the monitors. In addition to the high cost of safely recycling this quantity of electronics, the Region also struggled with finding a reputable recycler. EPA Headquarters provided funds to cover the recycling costs, and the new READ contract helped EPA find a qualified vendor. According to Priselac, who also works on the EMS recycling subcommittee, "our IT staff was uncomfortable using recyclers who had not been audited." Although the costs for safe recycling are high, Priselac notes that costs will fall off, especially after the first year when the facility has this huge initial volume of stockpiled materials recycled.

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