

Writing an Environmental Policy Statement for Your Business



An environmental policy statement is a declaration of your company's commitment to the environment that gives a concise description of what your company is trying to achieve with your environmental goals and how you will accomplish your goals.

A well written environmental policy statement can provide a unifying vision that will guide the actions of a company's employees, management, shareholders, customers, and suppliers. It clearly outlines for staff, where a company stands on environmental matters for all stakeholders and how those standards should be met.

Your company's policy statement doesn't have to be lengthy or wordy. The most effective policies are written in plain language that is motivating and inspires people to change. The policy should be communicated to all employees, stakeholders and customers as a commitment to improving environmental sustainability over time.

Your EPS should be realistic, achievable and relevant to your company's activities and practices and should have top-level support (i.e., endorsement from managing director, president, chief executive or other).

Things you may want to include in your statement are listed below:

- Comply with existing environmental regulations
- Comply with applicable codes of practice.
- Assess the environmental effects of all operations.
- Continuously seek to improve environmental performance.
- Reduce pollution, emissions and waste.
- Reduce the use of all raw materials, energy, and supplies.
- Raise awareness, encourage participation, and train employees.
- Expect similar environmental standards from all suppliers and contractors.
- Assist customers in making environmentally sensitive choices.
- Work with the local community.
- Participate in discussions about environmental issues.
- Monitor progress and review performance (usually annually).

Specific issues relevant to your company could include:

- Reduce impacts of transportation.
- Better recycling of materials and packaging.
- Minimizing waste generation.
- Maximizing recycling and reuse opportunities.
- Efficient use of water and energy.
- Use of biodegradable or alternatives to chemicals.
- Minimizing use of solvents.
- Use of timber products from sustainable (managed) forests.

Writing Process

To begin, review how your company currently handles environmental and human health concerns and compare your current practices with where you would like to be.

Your EPS is best developed through discussions with different employees representing different functions in your company, especially people that have the day-to-day working knowledge of your company's operations. They'll have good input into how to increase resource efficiency.

After evaluating current practices, talking with staff and identifying specific ways your company could be a better environmental steward, list your goals and realist steps your company could take to accomplish your vision.

While writing and implementing your EPS, ask yourself if your policy has the following elements that will make it a great statement and a good fit for your company.

1. *Focus* – What do you want the policy statement to achieve? Is it to be a vision statement, or present core values and principles? Is it meant to provide inspired leadership, or legal protection so that when employees do something wrong the company can say that the employee or contractor 'violated company policy'? Or is it to present a framework of procedures and responsibilities? It can do any of these, but should try to do only one. In addition, keep it to one page.
2. *Relevant content* – If the policy's content is not relevant to the company's existing culture and operation, it might do more harm than good. Merely parroting the ISO requirements sends a clear signal that the focus of the policy is solely to meet the ISO requirement – not very inspiring.
3. *Signed and dated* – The policy statement should be signed and dated by both the CEO and the highest level person in the company with ultimate line responsibility for environmental performance. Personal signatures demonstrate a personal commitment. If the names change, it should be resigned and dated by the new individuals as quickly as possible.
4. *Posted, reviewed and renewed* – The policy statement should be posted on the company's web site and at each facility, in a place where all employees and visitors can readily see it. The best location is in the entrance lobby next to the building's receptionist. It should be reviewed every year or two to ensure current applicability and revised as appropriate.
5. *Audited for conformance* – While companies and sites are frequently audited for conformance with regulatory and procedural requirements, few audit for conformance with their environmental policy. This is the ultimate in credible corporate governance because any deviations in conformance with the policy will be leading indicators of problems yet to come.
6. *Supporting documents and resources* – These help employees understand and implement the policy, as well as cross-reference other relevant company documents and provide contact assistance.

Business Examples

Keswick Brewery EPS

<http://www.keswickbrewery.co.uk/about-us/environmental-policy-statement.html>

MOB Media EPS

<http://www.mobmedia.com/green.aspx>

IBM's environmental policy statement, <http://www.ibm.com/ibm/environment/policy/index.shtml>

Morgan Stanley's eps

http://www.morganstanley.com/globalcitizen/pdf/Environmental_Policy.pdf

Atlas Roofing Company EPS

http://www.atlasroofing.com/general2.php?section_url=148

HSS EPS

<http://www.hss.com/content/download/environmental270309.pdf>

Generic Examples

1. Protecting our shared environment is of fundamental importance to Company X, as it is to our employees, customers, and other stakeholders. To support this common goal, we will:

- Comply with applicable local, state, and federal environmental regulations.
- Continually improve the environmental performance of our products and processes.
- Protect the health and safety of our employees and surrounding communities and ecosystems.
- Use natural resources, including raw materials, energy, and water, as efficiently as possible.

We will work to achieve these commitments by:

- Requiring environmental awareness training of all our employees and more specific environmental training where appropriate.
- Evaluating products and processes from the point of view of chemical risk, dedicating ourselves to finding better alternatives based on preventing pollution in the first place.
- Considering the risks of our raw materials and products at all stages of our product's life, placing priority on risks present during our production process and during our customers' use of our products.
- Working collaboratively with our customers, suppliers, and the surrounding community on environmental issues.

We will make every effort to ensure that environmental performance is an integral part of

Company X's performance and of the performance of all of our employees. To this end, we will measure and periodically report on our progress in realizing these commitments.

2. XYZ Limited is committed to leading the industry in minimizing the impact of its activities on the environment.

The key points of its strategy to achieve this are:

- Minimize waste by evaluating operations and ensuring they are as efficient as possible.
- Minimize toxic emissions through the selection and use of its fleet and the source of its power requirement.
- Actively promote recycling both internally and amongst its customers and suppliers.
- Source and promote a product range to minimize the environmental impact of both production and distribution.
- Meet or exceed all the environmental legislation that relates to the Company.
- Use an accredited program to offset the greenhouse gas emissions generated by our activities.

Signed by Senior Director of company

3. Newly-Enlightened Co accepts responsibility for the harmful effects its operations have on both the local and global environment and is committed to reducing them.

Newly-Enlightened Co will measure its impact on the environment and set targets for ongoing improvement.

The Company will comply with all relevant environmental legislation.

The Company will implement a training program for its staff to raise awareness of environmental issues and enlist their support in improving the Company's performance.

Newly-Enlightened Co will encourage the adoption of similar principles by its suppliers.

Signed by Mr Green, Company Director

References

http://www.epa.gov/dfe/pubs/iems/iems_guide/module2-rev.pdf

<http://agreenfootprint.wordpress.com/2008/05/21/how-to-write-an-environmental-policy/>

http://www.pge.com/includes/docs/pdfs/b2b/purchasing/supplierdiversity/gogreen/Developing_Your_Green_Policy.pdf

<http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2003/07/31/essentials-superb-corporate-environmental-policy-statement>