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Continuous improvement and ISO 14001 in practice – Action research in a concrete technology company

January 2004

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Degree Programme in Business and Administration
Business and Entrepreneurship
Thesis, Tradenomi, 83 pages, 6 appendices

ABSTRACT

In this study the usage of an environmental management system ISO 14001 was analysed in order to establish whether the system provides sufficiently appropriate information for everyday work in the field of manufacturing concrete technology products. The aim of the study is to clarify the needs of the environmental aspects and the environmental objectives. Furthermore the study is to explore the possibilities of ISO 14001 to fulfil the needs of sustainable development and the continuously improving level of environmental performance in the before mentioned line of business.

The study was divided into three different parts. A telephone inquiry in February 2003 acted as an introduction to the environmental management theme. The material related to ISO 14001 was gathered by carrying out an action research during 1.6. -31.8.2003. The targets were to chart the actual situation in the organisation, carry out and reform the environmental procedures in addition to the internal environmental auditing scheme which was included to support the analysis.

According to the results, the environmental management system ISO 14001 is a flexible and useful tool for companies in the concrete technology business. However, the process might be heavy to bear if the vision and targets are overestimated. A mutual understanding in environmental issues between the employees and the directors is vital.

ABI/INFORM: environmental management system, ISO 14001, environmental performance, environmental auditing scheme