Greetings!

**Importance of conducting an Environmental Audit**

Why should your company conduct environmental audits? Essentially, it is because it’s the best way to specifically establish which environmental regulations apply to your facility while making sure you are in compliance with all the requirements. Through this, you will avoid costly and unnecessary fines by the authorities in charge. Nowadays, most companies have resolved to be more proactive and reduce their risk, by implementing environmental audits as part of their routine. This week’s Eco-byte will focus on the importance of conducting an environmental audit.

According to National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) “Environmental Audit (EA) is the systematic documented, periodic and objective evaluation of how activities and processes of an ongoing project determine how far these activities and programs conform with the approved environmental management plan of that specific project and sound environmental management practices.”

The main objective of conducting an environmental audit is to assess facility activities and services in relation to:

1) Compliance with relevant statutory and internal requirements
2: Promoting good environmental management

3) Establishing the performance baseline for developing an environmental management system (EMS)

4) Maintaining credibility with the public

5) Raising staff awareness and enforcing commitment to environmental policy

6) Exploring improvement opportunities

**Types of Environmental Audits**

On the basis of why, when and by whom auditing is done, two major types of audits can be distinguished:

**i. Compliance or Control Audit**

This kind of audit is used by National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) whenever it deems it necessary to check compliance with specific environmental practices or to verify self-auditing reports. The audit verifies the adequacy of the environmental management plan in mitigating negative impacts affecting the environment. The Environmental Management and Coordination Act, 1999 under section 68(4) require the owner of a premise or company through a certified environmental expert to prepare and submit an environmental audit report to NEMA.

**ii. Self or System Audit**

Self-audits are conducted internally by the facility in order to continuously improve on their environmental management practices. Thus, the existence of an Environmental Management System is necessary. Further, environmental audits can take various forms depending on the facility aspects being examined (see below Table 1)

**Table 1: Nature of Environmental Audits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Audit</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waste Audit</td>
<td>Provides assurance to corporate management that the environment and public are protected against acute or chronic hazards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational, health and Safety Audit</td>
<td>Ensures that workers are protected from being hurt or gradually harmed as a result of long-term adverse working conditions, including protection from acute or chronic health hazards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Audit</td>
<td>Focuses on preventative measures that can be taken to reduce the level of risk a facility holds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Audit</td>
<td>Examines energy use in a facility with a view of identifying areas that may require</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Think of it as preventive management, like going to the doctor for a checkup or checking your vehicle’s engine oil. The objective here is to identify and fix any problems before they become too serious or expensive to address. If you have an effective environmental management system in place, you are already familiar with the importance and value of conducting audits.