



# DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

## What is an Environmental Policy ?

An environmental policy is simply a statement of an organizations commitment to improving it's environmental performance. The policy can be as short as 1-2 paragraphs or as long as 1-2 pages, depending on the size and complexity of the operation.

## Why Develop an Environmental Policy ?

An environmental policy is a road map for improving your organizations environmental performance. Developing a policy will help you obtain a better understanding of how your organization's activities impact on the environment and how to reduce those impacts. Improving your organizations environmental performance has numerous benefits including creating a healthier safer workplace, improving your bottom line and enhancing your corporate image in the community.

## Getting Started

Understanding how your operations impact on the environment is the first step to developing an environmental policy. Once you know how your activities can potentially affect the environment you can develop a policy to minimize these impacts. Consider how issues such as the following relate to your operations: water use, energy use, raw materials used, supplies used (chemicals, paper products, packing and shipping materials etc.) wastes generated (hazardous, non-hazardous, liquid effluent, air emissions) and direct impacts on the environment such as land disturbance, watercourse alterations, vegetation management or removal. Next, consider what

steps your organization can take to reduce these impacts (e.g., water conservation, energy conservation, green purchasing, waste reduction etc.)

## Writing The Environmental Policy

Once you have an understanding of how your organization affects the environment you are ready to begin crafting the environmental policy. An environmental policy is a statement of an organization's commitment to protect the environment. Many policies also state the general actions or guiding principles that will be used to implement this commitment.

Ideally , the development of an environmental policy should involve representatives of employees from all levels within the organization. The final policy should be signed off by senior management.

Each organization is unique; local conditions and the type of activities your organization is involved will dictate the specific content of your policy. Some important points to consider when writing the policy are:

It should be written in clear language that is easily understood by all employees,

It should have enough built-in flexibility to be applicable to diverse company activities and,

It should include a commitment to pollution prevention and continuous improvement

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As a minimum, your policy should include the following:

- # a commitment to protect the environment (preferably through the use of pollution prevention)
- # a commitment to comply with existing legislation.
- # a commitment to communicate the policy to all employees
- # a framework for setting and reviewing environmental goals
- # an identification of the person responsible for implementing and updating the policy
- # a commitment to continuous improvement

### Finding Sample Environmental Policies

A sample policy is provided below to assist you. In addition, you may want to consider contacting your professional or industry association, or looking at the websites of others in your line of work to see if they have an environmental policy that you can use as a starting point.

### Communicating Your Policy

The key to making sure that the policy works in your organization is to ensure that everyone is aware of it. Once a policy has been developed it should be communicated to all employees of the organization. You may also wish to communicate the policy to your customers/clients. Some ideas for doing this include; posting the policy in a front office or behind a sales counter, including all or parts of it in corporate communications such as brochures and business cards.

### A Final Note

An environmental policy should not be a static document. It should be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure that it remains relevant as the business grows and changes over the years.

### Sample Environmental Policy

Company name recognizes environmental protection as one of our guiding principles and a key component of sound business performance. We are committed to providing a quality \_\_\_\_\_ ( *product, service etc.*) in a manner that ensures a safe and healthy workplace for our employees and minimizes our potential impact on the environment. We will operate in compliance with all relevant federal provincial and municipal environmental legislation and we will strive to use pollution prevention and environmental best practices in all we do.

We will;

integrate the consideration of environmental concerns and impacts into all of our decision making and activities,

promote environmental awareness among our employees and encourage them to work in an environmentally responsible manner,

train, educate and inform our employees about environmental issues that may affect their work,

reduce waste through re-use and recycling and by purchasing recycled, recyclable or re-furbished products and materials where these alternatives are available, economical and suitable,

promote efficient use of materials and resources throughout our facility including water, electricity, raw materials and other resources, particularly those that are non-renewable,

avoid unnecessary use of hazardous materials and products, seek substitutions when feasible, and take all reasonable steps to protect human health and the environment when such materials must be used, stored and disposed of,

purchase and use environmentally responsible products that have been selected based on criteria including low toxicity or environmental hazard, durability, use of recycled materials, reduced energy and/or water consumption reduced packaging and ability to be recycled, refilled or refurbished at end of life,

where required by legislation or where significant health, safety or environmental hazards exist, develop and maintain appropriate emergency and spill response programs,

regularly communicate our environmental program to our clients, customers and the public and encourage them to support it,

strive to continually improve our environmental performance by periodically reviewing our environmental policy in light of our current and planned future activities.

Signature (Note: Signature of Person Responsible for Policy e.g., CEO, President or Owner/Principal):

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_