

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Semitool

Montana Manufacturing Extension Center

Semitool Gets ISO 14000 Thumbs Up!

Client Profile:

Semitool, Inc. is a world leader in the design, development, manufacture, and support of high performance processing systems used in fabricating semiconductor devices. The company maintains sales and support centers in the United States, Europe and Asia. Striving to be an exemplary environmental citizen, the company has had an Environmental Management System (EMS) in place since 1998. The company employs 400 people at its facility in Kalispell, Montana.

Situation:

Semitool's long range plan was to attain ISO 14000 to provide a framework to effectively manage environmental affairs and integrate environmental values into operations. The company has observed a growing global trend of compliance to the standard as well. Recognizing that an auditable process provides momentum and helps a company continue to reduce waste as well as costs and inefficiencies, it elevated its goal of attaining certification and contacted the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

Solution:

MMEC assisted Semitool with an ISO 14001 readiness assessment prior to its registration audit and formal certification to the worldwide environmental quality standard attained in February 2006. The project included mass training sessions for staff and a management review to explain the audit structure and value of certification to help further management buy-in. Semitool received a significant environmental thumbs-up in July, 2006 during the first ISO 14001 surveillance audit of its EMS. Passing the six-month surveillance audit is a real measure of success, often more challenging than the original audit, according to the MMEC field engineer who specializes in quality standards and has worked on several quality projects at the vertically integrated company.

The company has further reduced solid waste into the landfill, and while it has always had aluminum can and paper recycling, a closer look is now taken at lesser volume things generated such as magazines and plastic bottles. Containers have been set up to routinely collect those, and the company has recaptured thousands of dollars in recycling metal scrap from the manufacturing process, as well. The company recycles all consumable remnant including plastics and Teflon. Management finds that monetarily, it's a great value to recycle, particularly Teflon. It uses its cans and bottle recycling to maintain an employee emergency fund to help with hardship incidents. With continuous improvement in mind, the EHS Coordinator is actively profiling the solid waste stream to the landfill -- a continuing part of the measuring and monitoring effort. Energy conservation efforts are focusing on electrical use from lighting and computers to equipment that is high voltage. And other natural resource uses such as fossil fuels and employee transportation will be evaluated in the future.

Results:

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- * Recaptured \$40,000 in recycling metal scrap from the manufacturing process.
- * Reduced solid waste going into landfill.
- * Recycling paper and plastics.

Testimonial:

"The Montana Manufacturing Center field engineer is an expert with quality systems; knows them inside out. I found him very responsive; he worked kinks out and responded to action items to help get the job done. We have been able to help our employee base become more aware of what environmental issues are out there and that we have a responsibility; it helps us be similar in way we think about the environment."

Tim Dutter, EHS Coordinator