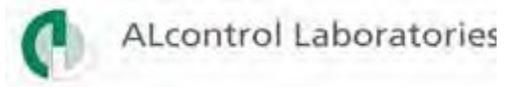


Case study

LRQA Certification doesn't cost - it pays!



About ALcontrol

ALcontrol provides testing and analytical services for soil, water, food, oil, asbestos and air to help clients demonstrate compliance with regulations and achieve their health, safety and environmental goals.

Through a network of laboratories in 11 European countries and providing support to customers globally, ALcontrol aims to be the leading environment and food testing group in Europe.

The numbers

Over 2000 employees

30 laboratories and service centres conducting millions of tests per year

Over 100 logistics points for sample collection

Website: www.alcontrol.com

Standards achieved

ISO 14001:2004 Environmental Management Standard

ISO 17025 Competency for Test and Calibration Laboratories

BS EN 15675 & BS EN 15259 Standards relating to Air Quality, Stationary Source Emissions (also participant in UKAS BS EN 14181 Pilot Programme)

Leading environment and food testing group, ALcontrol Laboratories, was initially awarded ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems (EMS) certification by LRQA in 2003. Since that time LRQA's Business Assurance approach to assessing ALcontrol's management systems has delivered a broad spectrum of benefits that Health Safety and Environment Manager, David Doherty says have provided "a ten-fold payback."

Achieving ISO 14001 certification at ALcontrol

A key feature of the ALcontrol brand is the provision of fast accurate results that give customers confidence to act. Certification to internationally accepted standards is fundamentally important to ALcontrol. Since a large proportion of the company's business lies within the environmental sector, it is imperative for ALcontrol to demonstrate leadership in environmental management through credible third-party assurance. Four key objectives lie behind ALcontrol's drive towards the achievement of ISO 14001 across all of its sites:

1. meet stakeholder needs
2. comply with regulations
3. improve environmental management
4. improve efficiency and reduce costs

ISO 14001 in action

Within ISO 14001 ALcontrol has sought to reduce waste volumes through packaging minimisation. For example, when possible, deliveries are received on pallets rather than individual boxes and every effort is made to re-use or recycle materials; empty chemical bottles are treated in a furnace and reused, and laboratory consumables are cleaned for re-use. The deployment of compactors and balers has resulted in up to 50% of waste being diverted from landfill on some sites, with an associated reduction in waste costs.

ISO 14001 implementation has also resulted in a range of energy reduction initiatives.

A traffic light system enables staff to identify which electrical equipment can be turned off; extraction systems are only operated when needed and storage has been reorganised so that some walk-in cold stores could be de-commissioned.

These measures, combined with good servicing schedules and staff awareness of energy usage, saw a reduction in ALcontrol's energy consumption by 17% for 2009 in comparison with 2007. This equates to over 1.5 million Wh saved over the past 2 years which is a cost saving of over £100,000.

Why LRQA

David Doherty says, "In LRQA we have a partner that understands our business, the market and relevant legislation. This is vitally important because all of these things are constantly changing, LRQA's Business Assurance approach helps us reduce risks, exploit new opportunities and significantly reduce our costs through efficiency improvements. The road to certification has generated savings, not costs, for our business."

Neil Whitfield, ALcontrol Environment Officer, says, "LRQA has helped us to improve the operational performance of the whole business. We have been extremely impressed with the knowledge and experience of the LRQA assessors; they have a deep understanding of our business and the markets that we serve, which enables them to provide highly valuable help and insight in the pursuit of our objectives."

"LRQA's Business Assurance approach helps us reduce risks, exploit new opportunities and significantly reduce our costs through efficiency improvements"

David Doherty, ALcontrol Health Safety and Environment Manager

Working with LRQA

As part of the ongoing partnership with ALcontrol, LRQA assessors focus on key themes that lead to continual improvement in ALcontrol's EMS. Furthermore, David Doherty says, "LRQA's Business Assurance approach ensures that the EMS affects every aspect of the company's operation in every location, so that improvements are sustainable."



It is important to note that ALcontrol is an organisation which has always viewed the route to certification as one that should deliver far more than the certificate at the end of the process. Denis Ives, LRQA's UK Business Centre Manager, says, "One of the prime reasons for the success of our relationship with ALcontrol is the company's desire for tangible business improvement in addition to a certificate. Our Business Assurance approach looks at the most relevant issues and risks to ALcontrol's organisation. It is the ongoing achievement of our shared objectives that delivers real value to the business."

Benefits of LRQA Business Assurance

LRQA's Business Assurance helps organisations manage their systems and risks to improve and protect current and future performance. Working with ALcontrol towards ISO 14001 certification, this has translated into tangible results in seven key areas:

1. Regulations

Prior to LRQA's involvement, in 2003 ALcontrol was involved with 25 different regulations. Working with LRQA, ALcontrol has now identified almost 200 regulations and guidelines that apply to different parts of the business.

2. Less wastage/cost savings

Recycling and waste reduction have become key elements of the EMS and David Doherty estimates that cost savings from reduced waste disposal amount to over £50k per year. The Hawarden site has demonstrated a 40% reduction in liquid waste for incineration and the Rotherham site has seen a 30% increase in recycling (comparing 2009 with 2008).

3. Stakeholder approval

A staff survey has demonstrated approval for ALcontrol's environmental credentials. As a provider of environmental testing services, staff would not be content if their employer's environmental performance did not meet or exceed their own.

4. Risk reduction

LRQA's Business Assurance methodology specifically addresses areas of existing and potential risk throughout the assessment process. It also helped ALcontrol identify areas of vulnerability to future legislation and adapt the business accordingly.

5. Increased sales

Simon Turner, Commercial Director for ALcontrol's environmental business in the UK and Ireland, says: "ISO 14001 provides commercial benefits in two distinct ways. Firstly, certification provides us with competitive advantage and is a specific requirement in many of the bids that we make. The second benefit of ISO 14001 stems from the improved efficiency that is derived from working with LRQA. Process driven cost reduction in areas such as energy and waste help the business to remain as competitive as possible."

6. Business resilience

ISO 14001 provides stakeholders with confidence that every environmental aspect of the business is being managed effectively.

7. Environmental compliance

An effective EMS ensures that the company complies with environmental regulations and avoids the bad publicity and costs associated with failure.

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