



## **Topic Hub: Environmental Measurement    Subsection : Reasons to Measure Environmental Performance**

Pollution prevention or source reduction projects, investments, and programs that are not tracked lose out on some very important information and insight.

Four overarching benefits of measuring environmental performance are:

- Glean perspective on what's working and what's not working
  - Understand and prove progress toward sustainability, environmental goals and environmental quality
  - Create an essential feedback and learning mechanism to support management decisions and effectively apply future effort(s) and investments in environmental improvement
  - Market effectiveness of programs and opportunities
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The benefit of information showing the status of an organization, program, community, or ecosystem, depends to some extent on the audience. Managers, employees, and other stakeholders should know as much as possible about how their environmental efforts and participation impact an organization, program and the environment.

Understanding environmental performance fosters a greater sense of accountability, personal ownership, problem solving initiative, and better prioritization.

Motivation for behavioral changes can be driven by translating the measured information into meaningful messages that help people understand how their environmental efforts make a difference.

Examples:

"Assuming Pacific Northwest fuel mix, your efforts in helping our company reduce energy consumption by 5,000 kwh avoids 976 pounds of carbon dioxide, a prolific greenhouse gas."

"Your environmental efforts have resulted in a cost savings of \$xxx for our company."

"Your efforts in eliminating landfilling of 5 tons of solid waste ultimately avoids around 1,100 pounds of methane, a potent greenhouse gas." (*Calculation source: [Illinois States Workbook](#)*)

"Recycling 1 ton of aluminum saves the equivalent of 2350 gallons of gasoline. This is equivalent to the amount of electricity used by the typical home over a period of 10 years." (*Source: Indiana Department of Education. 1992.*)

Some additional benefits of measuring include:

- Effective management and reduction of wastes, emissions, discharges, and accidents
- Ensuring up-to-date environmental practices at each facility
- Controlling environmental costs
- Understanding the effectiveness and environmental benefits of investments
- Choosing wisely between alternative projects
- Meeting voluntary business initiatives, (e.g., CERES Principles, Responsible Care, Global Reporting Initiative's Sustainability Reporting Guidelines, The Natural Step, Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award, various local or regional environmental awards, etc.)
- Easier environmental reporting (regulatory, publicity, stakeholder reports, other)
- Justifying corporate support for capital requests and allocations
- Public relations and improving public image

Additional reasons for agencies or environmental programs to measure can also include:

- Communicating activities and accomplishments to policymakers
- Sharing and/or aggregating information with other state or region pollution prevention metrics
- Using information to improve program management
- Providing program funders with relevant activity and outcome information
- Justifying continued funding or staffing for a program
- Influencing policy development

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