

SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

signing up for change

MWH has joined a carbon reduction initiative that helps suppliers of the utilities sector reduce their impact on the environment – and acquire a certificate to prove they’ve done so

Despite tough economic conditions, climate change remains high on the agenda for most corporate boards. But the problem facing many companies is how to engage and involve suppliers in measuring, managing and reporting their carbon footprints.

MWH, a global provider of environmental engineering, consulting and construction services to the water and energy infrastructure markets, is part of a solution. As one of the largest suppliers in the utilities sector, it has signed up to be certified through the carbonReduction Programme, a collaborative initiative taken up by many companies in the utilities sector to reduce carbon emissions in their supply chains. So far the results have been promising.

Although MWH, which operates from 197 offices across 38 countries, has been active in measuring its carbon footprint since 2006, it wanted to ensure that its scope and methods of measurement were appropriate, accurate and in-line with emerging standards. It was also keen to have its processes and results independently verified. This is particularly important given that buyers are increasingly demanding that a supplier’s commitment to reducing its carbon footprint should be a pre-requisite for tenders.

The carbonReduction Programme, which is administered by the global sustainable procurement company, Achilles, allows suppliers to measure, manage and report their carbon footprint with help from companies that have signed up – including United Utilities, Scottish and Southern, National Grid, Anglian Water, E.ON UK and Northumbrian Water.

Once part of the programme, a supplier has to put together an emissions inventory that details all data it has collected, all areas that have been looked at, what

kind of boundaries have been drawn around the business, what business units have been included and any that might have been excluded. They also have to come up with a management and reduction plan to say what actions are going to be carried out over the coming year to reduce their footprint. Once this has been done, Achilles does an audit leading to a certificate that is available to buying organizations.

Alison Bradley, MWH’s environment manager for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, says this last part is crucial. ‘The independent auditing process of our work undertaken by Achilles has been invaluable, and to us, the most important aspect of the carbonReduction Programme,’ she explains.

Glenn Cargill, auditor for the programme, points out that while it’s important for Achilles to be helpful in the early parts of the process, ‘as a verification body we have to maintain independence, so we have to be careful we don’t tell a company how to do it. Our task is to get the scope and boundaries agreed and then verify results through source data’.

MWH’s present audit only covers its UK operations, but the findings have been used to improve the company’s carbon footprinting on a European and international level. ‘I’ve found myself referring back to things that have been done in the UK audit and applying them more widely,’ says Bradley.

Further information: www.achilles.com

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■ MWH has been active in measuring its carbon footprint since 2006, but the carbonReduction programme has provided a new focus for its activities

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MWH

Most companies are still struggling with measuring, let alone managing, their carbon footprint. Not so MWH. The agreement on a carbon reduction and management programme with clear targets enables its progress to be audited and properly certified.

Points to note:

- the economic downturn has not diminished this programme from its high place on the firm’s agenda
- MWH has pursued the initiative with thoroughness
- plans to extend the audit to overseas operations.

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