

Background Information

The Postal Industry and Environmental Sustainability

The International Post Corporation (IPC) represents 24 postal operators across Europe, the US and the AsiaPacific region. Its members deliver over 80 percent of global mail volumes which accounts for 330 billion letters each year. They also provide nearly 2.4 million jobs. IPC gives its members a platform to come together to share ideas and best practices and to collaborate to address issues relevant to the postal industry such as sustainability.

Carbon emissions are a significant issue for the postal industry, with the service provided by IPC's members involving 850,000 trucks, hundreds of flights, trains, ATVs, motorcycles, boats, over 100,000 facilities and tonnes of paper.

In 2007 based on a recommendation from members, IPC took the initiative to embark on a programme to lead the industry towards a more sustainable way of doing business. This involved collaboration with its member posts and Professor Alyson Warhurst, of Maplecroft, a UK-based research and advisory company. Professor Warhurst is a member of the UN Global Compact's (UNGC) Human Rights Working Group. Maplecroft also has a three year project working with the UNGC on human rights dilemmas and an on-line multi-stakeholder forum.

This culminated in the launch of an environmental measurement and monitoring system (EMMS) for the postal industry in May 2008. The system provides the sector with a transparent, scientific, sector specific carbon measurement and monitoring system based on the requirements of international best practice standards, such as the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, DJSI, FTSE4Good, ISO 14001, and current best practice from the corporate environment. It evaluates performance through the application of a scoring system that grades performance in ten carbon management proficiency areas and in key numeric carbon efficiency indicators.

IPC is signatory to the UN Global Compact, and an organizational stakeholder with the Global Reporting Initiative. It also intends to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), and is sharing information with the European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E) and the European Environment Agency (EEA).

IPC's EMMS provides members with a way of measuring and benchmarking their initiatives and optimizing their effectiveness. It can be used by all postal operators, regardless of size or what stage they are at in their environmental programs.

It was endorsed by IPC's members and a pilot of the system was completed in December 2008 in which 16 member posts took part. 21 members subsequently took part in its implementation, with the first round of reporting being finalized in September 2009, following 3rd party review by Maplecroft and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

The results will be used to create the first postal sector environmental sustainability report which will be launched at an event on 11th December 2009 in Copenhagen. This is the first time that a service sector has come together on a global level to create an environmental sustainability report for the industry.