

COMPETENCY PROFILE:

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE SPECIALIST

ROLE OVERVIEW

Environmental compliance specialists (ECS) ensure that companies and organizations follow local, federal, and provincial government regulations, permit conditions, application commitments, internal guidelines, best management practices, policies, and procedures. ECS coordinates and conducts internal environmental audits within organizations that center around internal processes and improvements that help determine their performance versus established performance standards. They may serve as liaisons for external environmental audits conducted by external entities focusing on compliance, regulatory, or accountability purposes.

Environmental compliance specialists may also implement compliance programs and advise on business operations that could affect regulatory compliance. Their work is crucial—it helps organizations avoid fees for noncompliance while promoting a healthier natural environment, which involves conducting necessary environmental tests, analyzing outcomes, and spotting violations to ensure they are rectified.

Environmental compliance specialists also respond to and prepare for environmental incidents or events, including hiring consultants to execute clean-up/corrections, reporting to regulators on behalf of the organization, and working with regulators to ensure the successful closure of the incident. The most common environmental compliance issues are air emissions, water discharges, hazardous waste, spill prevention, and stormwater management. Integrating climate change mitigation strategies into the ECS role is also increasingly important. It can help organizations address the interconnected challenges of environmental regulation and climate change.

ALSO KNOWN AS:

- Environmental Compliance Officer
- Environmental Permit and Compliance Specialist
- Compliance Analyst
- Compliance Consultant
- Compliance Auditor
- Compliance Advisor

NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION:

- 11201 – Professional occupations in business management consulting

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

- A bachelor's degree in environmental science, engineering, management, or a related field is essential. These programs offer comprehensive insights into ecological principles, pollution control, environmental laws, and sustainability, with biology, chemistry, physics, waste management, and environmental policy coursework.
- Pursuing a master's degree in environmental science, law, policy, or management can deepen expertise and boost career advancement opportunities. Advanced degrees enhance understanding of environmental regulations, policy analysis, and management, equipping professionals for leadership positions.
- Specialized knowledge in hazardous material management, air and water quality, and environmental auditing is beneficial, elective courses or certifications in these areas can strengthen a profile.
- Minimal or no prior work experience is required for entry-level positions. However, internships or volunteer work related to environmental regulations can provide valuable practical experience.
- Mid-level and senior roles demand years of experience in environmental compliance, including familiarity with environmental regulations, audit conduction, environmental management systems, and interaction with regulatory bodies.
- Continuous education is critical for keeping current with changing environmental laws and technologies.

TECHNICAL



Data Analysis

Utilizes established statistical methods to gather, assess, and interpret data on environmental aspects like air, soil, and water quality, along with waste production and energy use, identifying trends and patterns to guide strategic decisions.

- Analyzes the data collected to help establish performance baselines, identify areas for improvement, and establish reduction targets.
- Implements monitoring programs to track performance.
- Assess results to make recommendations to decision-makers.
- Prepares technical and research reports on observations, findings, and impacts to communicate conclusions to stakeholders, industry, government, or the public.
- Interprets statistical, technical, and environmental data to prepare clear and concise recommendations or reports.

Project Management

Supports the development of comprehensive environmental management plans that define how organizational projects are executed, monitored, and controlled, including environmental compliance requirements.

- Monitors and reviews project plans to ensure they comply with all environmental requirements.
- Schedules, tracks, and delivers regulatory approvals to ensure organizational actions remain within compliance.
- Develops/supports project permitting plans and compliance management systems to cover all gaps.

- Collaborates across departments to ensure project designs and specifications meet regulatory requirements and best practices for environmental and sustainability.
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Research

Stays informed about emerging trends, risks, policies, and regulations to inform decision-making, incorporating proven scientific methodologies, assessments, and strategies. Applies appropriate methods and techniques using empirical and measurable observation in their research to improve, correct, or improve compliance procedures and knowledge within an organization.

- Collaborates with internal decision-makers to gather information about organizational goals and objectives before researching to ensure alignment.
 - Research regulatory compliance requirements and emerging literature about the clients' operations to gain an in-depth understanding of the existing programs or processes and opportunities for improvement.
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Risk Assessments

Identifies any potential risks associated with the organization's activities and provides clear recommendations to minimize these risks.

- Creates and regularly maintains a library of all applicable laws and regulations applicable to the organization to keep track of the regulatory landscape.
- Takes appropriate precautions around risk zones to help reduce and mitigate the incidence of potential unforeseen events.
- Communicates risk management policies and procedures to colleagues and stakeholders to ensure an accurate understanding of the internal environment and, as needed, health, safety, and environment (HSE) policies to control and mitigate risks—aligns environmental risk compliance and risk management policies and procedures with other corporate or enterprise risk management programs.
- Identifies trends in the organization's HSE data and opportunities for improvement, generating reports containing recommendations for preventative and/or corrective actions at the site level to address issues as they become known.
- Develops, improves, and implements policies and procedures consistent with jurisdictional requirements to mitigate organizational risk factors.



Communication

Positively influences outcomes by delivering clear and concise communication that results in a better understanding of the organization's goals and objectives.

- Establishes and maintains positive relationships to obtain feedback with various internal and external parties such as:
 - Relevant local, provincial, and federal government authorities, multicultural or multilingual environments, and First Nations communities.
- Establishes positive working relationships within the organization, including with internal staff, management, or external stakeholders who work as part of a team and assist others.
- Communicate with cross-functional teams to share information and resources to improve compliance.
- Communicate compliance requirements and assessments with decision-makers in the organization so that they can make informed business decisions.

Critical Thinking

Effectively analyzes complex information about compliance regulations, challenges, and issues to help develop practical solutions for organizations to achieve and maintain compliance.

- Critically consider one's biases to ensure they do not change the outcome of a company's compliance audit or investigation.
- Considers varied factors (severity of noncompliance issues, compliance history, etc) to make balanced judgments about appropriate compliance remedial requirements.
- Determines level of noncompliance based on observations and gathered data to inform following audit steps.
- Makes clear and engaging presentations to internal staff, management, or external parties derived from environmental audits, compliance updates, and sustainability initiatives in a way that engages and inspires the audience to promote workers' interest and will to conduct work safely.

Attention to Detail

Reviews completed work by monitoring and checking information, data, calculations, recommendations, etc. and organizing tasks and resources efficiently to achieve objectives.

- Accurately completes internal audits with all relevant and necessary information to evaluate compliance and identify areas for improvement.
- Catches and corrects own errors or omissions, where applicable, to ensure compliance, efficiency, and safety.
- Provides accurate and reliable feedback when reviewing others' work to ensure consistent deliverables.
- Maintains a checklist of tasks to ensure all processes are followed, and small details are not overlooked.



Developing Environmental Compliance Programs

Considers all necessary factors of environmental compliance to develop effective environmental compliance programs.

- Identifies any risks a company's operation poses to the environment (e.g. air emissions, water discharges, hazardous chemical spills, etc.) to determine functional preventive and relevant contingency plans.
- Outlines actions that could be taken to return to the natural pre-event conditions to create a well-balanced plan and strategic approach.
- Develop and outline training plans for employees to raise awareness and ensure compliance with environmental policies and regulations and the consequence(s) of noncompliance. In the event of a material event that poses an environmental impact, employees understand environmental regulations, compliance procedures, and the importance of sustainable practices.

Environmental Policy Evaluation

Evaluates the sustainability of an organization's policy(s) to develop suitable alternatives to support sustainable business practices and ensure regulatory compliance with local, provincial, and federal regulations.

- Interprets and understands any relevant environmental requirements to apply this framework to evaluations of internal policies and their interaction with compliance.
- Applies an understanding of legal requirements to inform continual updates of organizational policies and remain compliant with regulations.
- Develop or update an organization's environmental management systems to create a transparent system with performance targets.
- Ensures that environmental policy aligns with the organization's policy development process (es) and related policies, is appropriate to the scale and relative risks posed by the organizations' products, services, and activities, and has defined outcomes.
- Analyzes and assesses employees' knowledge and environmental performance to promote an organizational understanding of environmental compliance.
- Apply a working knowledge of provincial and regulatory processes to streamline and focus project operations and ensure compliance.
- Makes clear recommendations based on observed areas of improvement to help decision-makers keep their organizations in compliance.

Implementing Environmental Compliance Programs

Plans, directs, and oversees the development and implementation of environmental compliance programs to ensure they are practical, realistic, and efficient.

- Tests a prepared environmental contingency plan regularly to evaluate staff preparedness and the existing plan's effectiveness.

- Monitors data benchmarks to assess the efficacy of the environmental program and identify where more rigorous measures might be necessary.
 - Re-evaluates the program as required by assessed deficiencies to close any gaps in the program.
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Regulatory Compliance

Contributes to an organizational plan to ensure the requirements of specific regulations, codes, and legislation at all levels, e.g., local, provincial, and federal.

- Assists in obtaining necessary environmental permits and licenses required for the organization's activities, ensuring that they meet regulatory requirements.
 - Updates and maintains environmental tracking systems, procedures, etc., to ensure accuracy.
 - Liaises with regulatory officials to support awareness of upcoming regulatory changes, approval timelines, and other regulatory-related impacts.
 - Engages with industry groups to support industry awareness and influence regulatory and government policy.
 - Engages with local communities and stakeholders to address concerns, provide information, and build and foster positive relationships.
 - Inspects sites to evaluate the implementation of compliance programs.
 - Regularly and systematically develops, updates, and communicates environmental and regulatory operating practices for effective decision-making.
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Environmental Audit Processes

Conduct internal environmental audits to evaluate an environmental management system and determine performance and compliance with government policies and regulations.

- Conducts on-site audits or inspections to evaluate and report on compliance with regulations and policies.
- Observe the facility and site observations to gauge how they operate daily.
- Assesses any activities that may pose material environmental impacts, such as, but not limited to, existing spills, discharges, waste generation, storage, and disposal, and associated operational control to mitigate risks.
- Identifies and collects data on key performance indicators to evaluate compliance performance.
- Reports on audit findings to communicate the results of the investigation and aid decision-makers.
- Recommends changes or next steps to remedy any areas of concern or noncompliance.
- Conduct appropriate follow-ups as necessary with those audited to resolve audit findings.



Environmental Education

Educates staff about environmental compliance policies, regulations, and requirements so that staff understand what is expected of them to do their jobs correctly.

- Creates and provides educational resources to help the organization and its members understand environmental regulations, compliance procedures, and the importance of sustainable practices.
- Monitors and evaluates staff on ongoing compliance to promote engagement and understanding of compliance requirements.
- Tracks which employees have completed compliance training and determines which still need to ensure a high completion rate.

In some organizations, environmental compliance specialists may also be responsible for:

Environmental Inspections/Monitoring

Studies environmental aspects of an area, e.g. air and water quality, waste generation, energy consumption, etc., to understand the potential effects of proposed development activities on the surrounding natural and human environments.

- Assess an organization's previous compliance history and its efforts to meet its internal and external compliance requirements to determine better next steps to achieve compliance in the future (or engage external consultants to undertake appropriate assessments).
- Provides input and advice on the impacts of engineered designs on life, health, property, economic interests, and the environment to ensure all aspects of products or systems are considered.
- Develops long-term compliance programs for monitoring the environment to oversee environmental impacts and ensure practical corrective actions are implemented.

Environmental, Social, and Governance Reporting

Leads the reporting of research findings and critical environmental, social and (corporate) governance (ESG) performance indicators to improve sustainability efforts and inform senior management for decision-making.

- Rewrite for clarity. Supports and/or monitors (as needed) emerging ESG trends to ensure an organization's sustainability efforts are consistent with current regulatory requirements and industry best practices.
- Integrate sustainability programs and objectives into existing processes and project decisions to meet and exceed regulatory requirements.
- Incorporates new learnings into the organization's environmental management system to ensure continuous improvement.
- Specific roles may provide technical input and advice on determining a company's internal sustainability metrics to develop a baseline to measure improvements and progress.