

ISO 14001:2015

Environmental Management Systems (EMS)

What is ISO 14001 and why was it revised?

ISO 14001:2015 key objectives:

- *Enable organizations to achieve their environmental objectives*
- *Enhance environmental performance*
- *Offer guidance to organizations who want to fulfil their EMS obligations*

Consumers have become more aware of the environment and environmental impacts creating higher expectations for companies and their sustainability efforts. ISO 14001:2015 was created to respond to the latest environmental and sustainability trends and increase compatibility with other ISO management system standards ([Annex SL](#)). The current standard, ISO 14001:2004 will be recognized until September 15, 2018, after which time it will no longer be valid. Many of the ISO standard elements are performed by companies who already follow a similar approach by using the plan-do-check-act cycle, making ISO integration a straightforward next step. ISO 14001:2015 formalizes and standardizes Environmental Management System (EMS) activities from an international perspective.

Who should use the ISO 14001:2015 revision?

ISO 14001:2015 is relevant to all organizations, regardless of size, location, product/service offering or industry, that have an impact on the environment. Any organization that wishes to enhance its environmental performance through an EMS may use the ISO 14001:2015 standard to achieve its intended outcomes. The standard is expected to have an impact on trainers, consultants, certification and accreditation bodies, auditors and standards writers.

What are the key changes to the standard?

Strategic environmental management – an organization is expected to understand its organizational context to effectively plan and integrate actions to address risks and opportunities into its operations.

Addition of proactive initiatives to protect the environment – requires the determination of risks/opportunities surrounding context (compliance obligations, environmental policy, nature of activities, products and services) inclusion of other interested parties (customers, suppliers, partners, government) and proactively meeting compliance obligations.

Greater focus on leadership – assigns senior management responsibilities to ensure compatibility between environmental policy, the organization's strategic direction and the effectiveness of its EMS.

Improved environmental performance – requires detailed and specific environmental programs to improve environmental performance through reduced emissions, discharge and waste levels.

Lifecycle perspective – an organization is expected to determine its environmental impacts from the acquisition of raw material through to the final process of re-use or disposal.

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Control of external providers – an organization should determine how it will control or influence all external providers.

Addition of a communications strategy – equal emphasis is placed on external and internal communications, with the expectation of consistent and reliable information being provided through the EMS.

Documented information – the new standard also allows organizations to determine which documentation is required for an effective operation.

High-level Structure (HLS) – ISO 45001:2015 is built on the same common framework as other ISO management system standards, allowing for easier integration of systems.

Takeaways

1. **Define your objectives** – what do you want to accomplish with the ISO 14001:2015 standard?
2. **Get senior management buy-in** – the key to success is executive support and leadership. The responsibility for the EMS and system audits will be distributed at the top level of organizations.
3. **Review existing EMS processes/systems** – understand the context, scope and issues of the organization, including organizational EMS boundaries and gaps.
4. **Define EMS Controls** – define how control is achieved within your organization.
5. **Integration with ISO 9001** – there are common elements between ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 9001:2015, so you can combine documentation to support the same ISO processes.

To find out more about how ComplyWorks can help you manage your compliance to ISO standards contact:

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