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# FAQ – ISO 14001 Revision 2015

Our experts have answered some frequently asked questions about the new ISO 14001:2015 standard? Feel free to **contact us** directly if your question isn't answered here!

## 1. DO WE HAVE TO REDEFINE THE SCOPE OF OUR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (EMS) IN ACCORDANCE WITH ISO 14001 REVISION 2015?

Norm-chap. 4.1, 4.3

The scope should be examined in terms of whether the boundaries of your EMS are clearly and credibly defined, and whether the context of your organization and the expectations of interested parties have been sufficiently taken into account. The organization should pick a suitable place in their documentation to define the scope in a format that is equally suitable for passing on to third parties so that it can be made available to all stakeholders.

## 2. WHO ELSE COUNTS AS AN "INTERESTED PARTY"?

Norm-chap. 4.2

Examples of so-called interested parties include customers, municipalities, suppliers, regulatory authorities, non-governmental organizations, investors and employees. There is no requirement for you to actively approach every one of them; instead, the idea is to consider any stakeholders who have expressed an active interest that has led to relevant requirements and binding commitments.

### 3. WHY DOES THE NEW VERSION OF ISO 14001:2015 MAKE NO MENTION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGER OR EMS OFFICER?

Responsibility for the EMS has been very clearly assigned to the highest levels of executive leadership, who can choose to delegate tasks to other leadership positions or people (including external contractors). It remains a viable option to concentrate several activities on a single person, but it is equally possible to spread competencies across groups of people.

Norm-chap. 5.1, 5.3

### 4. IS THE ISO 14001 REVISION 2015 REALLY GETTING RID OF THE EM HANDBOOK REQUIREMENT?

The handbook is no longer mandated, and you are only required to establish documentary information on specific norm requirements. Of course, users are free to bundle this information in a handbook for better clarity.

Norm-chap. 5.1

### 5. DOES ISO 14001:2015 REQUIRE US TO RESET OUR PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE EMS?

This is recommended, since the planning process has expanded to encompass organizational context and stakeholder expectations, and largely also because an ISO 14001:2015 certification now requires a risk assessment.

Norm-chap. 6.1.1

### 6. WHICH ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTS REQUIRE LOOKING AT THE "LIFE CYCLE"?

ISO 14001:2015 considers environmental aspects and related outcomes emanating from products, assuming it is feasible to monitor and affect them. Among other things, the "life cycle" of a product should comprise production of raw materials, development, manufacturing, transportation, consumption and disposal.

Norm-chap. 6.1.2

### 7. DO THE OLDER LEGAL PROVISIONS STILL APPLY?

Yes, although they may need to be amended to incorporate additional commitments, such as requirements stemming from interested parties.

Norm-chap. 6.1.3

### 8. WHAT DOES RISK ASSESSMENT MEAN IN THE NEW ISO 14001:2015 STANDARD?

The planning phase is not only meant to identify significant environmental factors (outcomes), but also to assess risks in connection with these ecological aspects (i.e., ignorance of risks and opportunities). This process leads to better chances of realistically achieving the proposed objectives and introducing measures to mitigate risk as needed.

Norm-chap. 6.1.4

### 9. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RISK MITIGATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS?

Measures for risk mitigation are designed above all to counter negative trends and pitfalls which might not be immediately apparent in the course of day-to-day operations. While such risks may never occur, an organization should be prepared for them at all times. In contrast, environmental targets are usually met through one-time measures designed to achieve specific objectives, the efficacy of which should ideally be verifiable.

Norm-chap. 6.1.5, 6.2.2

#### **10. DO WE NEED TO CREATE PROCEDURAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMUNICATIONS?**

ISO 14001:2015 only demands some form of documentary information as a record of communications. At the same time, the standard mandates a plan for the communications process. In this context, procedural instructions are a useful tool.

Norm-chap. 7.4

#### **11. WHICH ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS ALONG THE SUPPLY CHAIN NEED TO BE CONTROLLED AND MONITORED?**

Besides the obvious environmental impacts of a given manufacturing or service process, it is necessary to consider further aspects such as purchasing, product development, delivery, usage and disposal. This includes suppliers and affiliates, and especially outsourced processes, all of which need to be guided in the right direction. In some circumstances this may require obtaining suitable information on relevant environmental impacts associated with handling a product or providing a service.

Norm-chap. 9.1.1

#### **12. WHICH ASPECTS REQUIRE AN ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE?**

Assuming it is feasible and appropriate, an assessment of environmental performance is required in connection with activities that have a significant environmental impact; that engender binding commitments; that include relevant process controls; and with a view towards the measurability of progress on environmental targets.

Norm-chap. 8.1, 9.1.1

#### **13. WHEN DO WE HAVE TO WORK WITH KEY FIGURES?**

It is necessary to review relevant key figures for an overall assessment of environmental performance, which includes all important environmental aspects under examination. Especially when it comes to monitoring progress on measurable objectives, ISO 14001 Revision 2015 proscribes their use. DIN EN ISO 14031 is a useful resource in this regard.

Norm-chap. 6.2.2, 9.1.1

#### **14. SHOULD OUR MANAGEMENT REVIEW CONTAIN FRESH CONTENT?**

Attention has to be devoted to new norm requirements for risk assessment as well as questions concerning the adequacy of resources. The final statement on these matters must explicitly address the demand for resources.

Norm-chap. 9.3

#### **15. HOW IS "CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT" VERIFIED?**

According to ISO 14001:2015, in most cases improved environmental performance can be measured using key figures established in the process. Advancements for individual system elements (e.g., training or communications) may represent an improvement to the overall system, but because that is not the purpose of the management system per se, it is not sufficient in the long term.

Norm-chap. 10.2

## Questions about transitioning your certification to the new ISO 14001 revision 2015

### 1. WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR COMPANIES SEEKING THEIR FIRST ISO 14001 CERTIFICATION?

While it is still possible to obtain your initial certification based on the older standard, due to the release of ISO 14001:2015 this is not recommended.

### 2. WHAT ABOUT ORGANIZATIONS ALREADY CERTIFIED UNDER ISO 14001?

Firms that have previously been certified under ISO 14001 may opt for a gap analysis to identify necessary (and, by extension, unnecessary) organizational changes. Furthermore, companies are encouraged to examine their supply chains with a view towards the environmental

impacts of their products, services and processes, and to follow public discussions about new standards and the interpretation of various updated requirements.

### 3. HOW LONG IS THE GRACE PERIOD FOR TRANSITIONS?

You have up to three years to transition from an older version to the latest ISO 14001:2015 standard. This means that all legacy certificates expire on 15 September 2018, at which point they must be retracted. We guide you through the transition period with individually planned audits in an effort to minimize the effort required on your part.

**OUR EXPERTS ARE AT YOUR SERVICE – CONTACT US ANYTIME FOR ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS!**

ONLINE CONTACT