

TÜV NORD CERT – Revision of ISO 14001

Changes and Impacts in 2015

The revision of the international standard ISO 14001 for environmental management has been under way since early 2012. ISO 14001:2015 will replace the version from 2004 – with minor editorial changes from 2009 (ISO 14001:2004 + Cor 1:2009).

ISO 14001:2015 is scheduled to be published in September 2015. At the same time, the “International Organization for Standardization” (ISO) and the “International Accreditation Forum” (IAF) will jointly determine a transitional period. Companies certified according to ISO 14001:2004 or to the corrected version from 2009 will be granted between one and three years to transfer their environmental management system to ISO 14001:2015.

This raises some questions for the approx. 250,000 companies worldwide and the approx. 6,000 companies in Germany which are certified according to ISO 14001:

- What changes are to be expected?
- What needs to be considered?

Structural changes to ISO 14001:2015

High Level Structure

The revision will follow the so-called “High Level Structure”:

- Identical structure for all management systems
- Consistent use of core texts and terminology
- Better understanding of the standard
- More efficient implementation of integrated management systems

The ten chapters of ISO 14001:2015

1. Scope
2. Normative references
3. Terms and definitions
4. Context of the organisation

5. Leadership
6. Planning
7. Support
8. Operation
9. Performance evaluation
10. Improvement

Changes of content

The committee draft of the new ISO 14001 has an advisory function for the possible changes of content in the standard. Although further changes are possible, the Working Document contains the first indications regarding the content of the revised ISO 14001 and the new requirements for organisations.

It is already certain that the revised version of ISO 14001 will continue to be based on the “Plan-Do-Check-Act” model.

The new ISO 14001 will focus more on the environmental aspects along the value chain:

- Evaluation of the environmental impact not only of activities within the organisation, but also of upstream and downstream processes (e.g.: raw materials, logistics).
- Evaluation of environmental impacts within the lifecycle of products and services.
- Assessment and control of risks and opportunities and their relation to environmental impacts.

Details of the individual clauses

The changes within the ten clauses are considered in more detail below:

4. Context of the organisation

Organisations must clarify all external and internal aspects which have a significant impact on their ability to reach their environmental management objectives. This refers in particular to environmental conditions which can influence

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the operation of a company, its goods and services. In addition, the organisation is obliged to name all third parties who are important for the environmental management system, and to determine their needs and expectations.

5.1 Management responsibility

The requirements for management involvement and responsibility were expanded. The TOP management shall demonstrate management responsibility and commitment with regard to environmental management, for example by considering environmental protection performance parameters in strategic planning. This is to ensure that the requirements for environmental management are included in the core business processes and that the environmental management requirements lead to the desired results.

5.2 Environmental policy

The commitment to environmental issues expressed in the current version of the standard was sustained. The obligation to avoid the pollution of the environment was expanded by a commitment for the protection of the environment in the context of the organisation:

- Sustainable use of resources,
- Measures to reduce the impact of Climate Change (e.g.: switch from fossil to renewable energy sources),
- Protection of biodiversity and ecosystems,
- other relevant environmental aspects.

6.1 Measures for detecting risks and opportunities

The detection of risks and opportunities in the context of significant environmental aspects, legal requirements and corporate commitment as well as the external impacts is required in a more structured and detailed way in several clauses of the standard (z. B.: oil dependency of the chemical industry, limited availability of oil, switch to biotechnological procedures). Therefore, organisations should use risk management tools and mechanisms in the future (e.g. according to ISO Guide 73 “risk management”). From these, rules and measures for the improvement of the EMS are to be derived.

6.1.2 Identification of environmental aspects

Impact and responsibility in the value chain (lifecycle considerations [Lifecycle Assessment]). Here it is intended to include the product lifecycle in the review of environment protection measures. However, the

committee draft does not yet require an assessment of the product lifecycle.

6.1.3 Determination of legal requirements

Chapter 4.3.2 “Legal obligations and other requirements” of ISO 14001:2004 was replaced with “Legal requirements and self-commitment”. The main difference between “other requirements” and “self-commitment” is that the organisations can freely decide to make a self-commitment.

For example:

- Customer agreements,
- Guidelines formulated outside of the regulatory framework,
- Voluntary principles or good corporate practice,
- Voluntary environment seals or product responsibility commitments,
- Requirements of retail associations,
- Agreements with common interest groups or non-governmental organisations (NGOs),
- Corporate policy requirements.

6.2.1 Environmental objectives and planning to achieve them

Definition of requirements to enhance/improve the environmental performance of an organisation. The environmental performance evaluation based on characteristic figures is to be promoted. The organisation must define one or several indicators for each objective which will help to evaluate and demonstrate the level of performance and goal achievement. Reference is made to ISO 14031 and ISO 14005 with regard to definition of environment performance indicators.

7.4.3 External communication and reporting

New requirements for drafting an external communication strategy including communication goals, identification of interested parties and description of what is reported when. If the organisation decides to communicate externally in addition to the legal requirements, e. g. in case of environmental incidents, a detailed procedure must be established. For the organisation, this means that information must be truthful, not misleading, and it must be complete, transparent and reliable.

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7.5 Documented information

Based on the intention to make a management system and its documentation more flexible, instead of the common terms “documentation”, “document” and “record” and, only the term “documented information” is used. For the practical use of an EMS, this means that little documentation is mandatory. The organisation itself has the duty to define the required written regulations on its own responsibility in order to ensure the effectiveness of the EMS.

8.1 Operational planning and control

Strengthening of the relationship between environmental management and the core business of an organisation, i. e. goods and services, and the interaction with stakeholders/interested parties like customers and suppliers of the organisation on a strategic level.

There are particular conditions for processes outsourced by the organisation as well as for processes connected with the procurement of goods and services, including

- Definition and implementation of criteria for evaluating the supply of goods, services and outsourced processes under the aspect of the lifecycle of the product, service or process,
- Determination of environmental protection requirements which are suited for the procurement of the goods and services or outsourced processes,
- Requirements for the communication with suppliers (including subcontractors).

10. Improvement

In the future, there will be no extra rules for preventive measures. The main reason for this may be the fact that one of the main purposes of an environmental management system is in itself preventive action.

Conclusion for ISO 14001 users

New aspects like context of the organisation, stakeholder, risks and opportunities, product lifecycle, environmental indicators, self-commitments are already common practice in many organisations today – tomorrow they will be the requirements of a global standard for all. Therefore, the majority of ISO 14001:2004 users does not need to worry about the changeover to ISO 14001:2015.

However, the new requirements cannot be implemented without additional effort. But it is worthwhile. The future-oriented approach of ISO 14001 is definitely a positive challenge for users when it comes to the economically successful and sustainable development of their organisation.