

Facilities Management from A to Z



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I SO 14001

ISO 14001 is part of a family of 16 international ISO 14000 standards designed to assist companies in reducing their negative impact on the environment. The standard is not an environmental management system as such and therefore does not dictate absolute environmental performance requirements, but serves instead as a framework to assist organisations in developing their own environmental management. ISO 14001 can be integrated with other management functions and assists companies in meeting their environmental and economic goals.

In the same way that ISO9001 is entirely concerned with meeting customer requirements, ISO14001 is entirely concerned with meeting environmentally-related requirements, in particular, requirements relating to prevention and control of pollution.

In the UK, there are many hundreds of regulations, powers and associated acts related to pollution and the environment. All organisations are required to be aware of the relevant legislation and to comply with the requirements. ISO14001 merely provides the structure to do this in a systematic way.

In addition, ISO14001 requires that the organisation considers the significant impacts that its activities may have on the environment. Where it is possible, feasible and economic to make a meaningful improvement to those activities, the organisation should set itself targets for improvement with associated plans.

At the top level, ISO14001 requires that an organisation state their policy for the environmental management system (which must include a commitment to prevent pollution and to continually improve the environmental management system). They must identify all laws, regulations, codes of practice and other requirements which are environmentally related and monitor their level of compliance with the requirements

A key step is the identification of the aspects of the business which have a significant impact on the environment and those that it can control or influence. Targets should be set for each of these committing the organisation to red its environmental impact.

In support of this, the standard requires the organisation to have sufficient resources to meet these requirements, including suitably trained people. The roles, responsibilities and authorities of people involved in the system must be defined and communicated. There must be procedures for control of documents and records and plans developed for emergency situations that might impact the environment. All this must be monitored, measured and reviewed to evaluate compliance with the targets, and with legal and other requirements.

Internal audits must be and the results of those audits should be acted on as appropriate. When things go wrong, action must be taken to prevent or minimise or rectify any environmental impact. As with ISO9000 and other management system standards, senior management is required to review the effectiveness of the system and to establish plans for improving it.

A useful guide to understanding ISO14001 is the 'ISO 14001 Environmental Systems Handbook' by Ken Whitelaw published by Butterworth-Heinemann ISBN-10: 0750648430